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MARVIN MUDRICK

Genji and the Age of Marvels

THE TALE OF GENJI has been made accessible to English-speaking readers by Mr. Waley's immense and heroic labor of translation; and the translator, taking advantage of his semi-proprietary rights, treats the novel and its author, from time to time, with an embarrassing petulance. In his introduction, for example, he spends pages attempting to justify his own peevish impression of Lady Murasaki (while her diaries, from which he quotes for evidence, give only the impression of an extraordinarily observant and contemplative woman); and, struggling with the thousands of poems in the text (poetry being in eleventh-century Japan, on the evidence of the text, an art and a discipline practiced in all human relations by cultivated men and women), he registers his impatient objection to charged poetic speech by noting that it would be "tedious" to explain the "puns" and "ambiguities"—one assumes, from the few instances he allows us, that he means the elaborate ceremonial complexities of image and word-play—in which the poems apparently abound.

Mr. Waley convicts himself of something worse than peevishness and impatience, however, when he remarks of the opening chapter of the novel that it "should be read with indulgence" because "in it [Lady] Murasaki, still under the influence of her somewhat childish predecessors, writes in a manner which is a blend of the Court chronicle with the conventional fairy-tale." The non-Orientalist literary critic, armed only with what Mr. Waley has made of the text, must no doubt move with caution in the vicinity of watchful scholars and historians; but scholarship itself is never more liable to an unwary complacency than when it is infringing on the proper ground of criticism.

Lady Murasaki begins, it may be critically remarked, "in a manner which is a blend of the Court chronicle with the conventional fairy-tale" because she is beginning with a fairy-tale hero whose breeding, talent, virtue, and beauty are certified by his royal lineage, itself certified by the unfolding of genealogies in the first chapter. Genji is already, as a child, so beautiful that he

is called *Hikaru*, "The Shining One". Half a century and hundreds of episodes later, years after his death, he is still remembered, by people who knew him only remotely or not at all, as a sunlike presence whose withdrawal darkened the world and made plain the instability of created things. In the superb first chapter alone, the contraries are proposed at once, in powerful fairy-tale isolation: the image of the lovely child growing up, and the bleak, insistently simple elegiac image of the Emperor's grief for Genji's dead mother.

No fairy godmother ever presided over a more fortunate childhood than Genji's. The young prince is "of unrivalled beauty" (15)¹, and the favorite of his father, the Emperor. Fearing that the child will be insecure at Court because his mother was a commoner, the Emperor "set seriously to work upon his education, and saw to it that he should be made perfect in every branch of art and knowledge" (16). He is by the time of his youth a master of the civilized accomplishments: the writing of poetry, the use and recognition of apt allusion, calligraphy, painting, singing, the playing of musical instruments, ritual dancing. During the first of the Imperial festivals described in the novel,

Prince Genji danced the "Waves of the Blue Sea." To no Chujo was his partner; but though both in skill and beauty he far surpassed the common run of performers, yet beside Genji he seemed like a mountain fir growing beside a cherry-tree in bloom. There was a wonderful moment when the rays of the setting sun fell upon him and the music grew suddenly louder. Never had the onlookers seen feet tread so delicately nor head so exquisitely poised; and in the song which follows the first movement of the dance his voice was sweet as that of Kalavinka whose music is Buddha's law. So moving and beautiful was this dance that at the end of it the Emperor's eyes were wet, and all the princes and great gentlemen wept aloud. When the song was over and, straightening his long dancer's sleeves, he stood waiting for the music to begin again and at last the more lively tune of the second movement struck up—then indeed, with his flushed and eager face, he merited more than ever his name of Genji the Shining One. (129)

Such beauty will do more than move to tears, it will seek and

¹Throughout this paper, numbers in parenthesis designate pages in the text, locating cited passages for the benefit of the reader wishing to check evidence in a very long novel. The edition is Mr. Waley's complete version: *The Tale of Genji*, by Lady Murasaki (tr. Arthur Waley). 2 vols. Houghton Mifflin, 1935.

attract; and Genji, electrically impressionable from his earliest youth, is always in love, usually with several women at once, all of whom oblige their lover (the exceptions are so rare as to warrant the almost incredulous scrutiny they receive) in spite of the rigors of a moral code by which women of rank live sequestered within the family and are properly visible, to strange men, only as silhouettes whose words are brought by menials from behind a screen. Genji's marriages, by the world's standards, are most fortunate: his first wife is Princess Aoi, his royal cousin; after her death, he marries the daughter of his half-brother the Emperor Suzaku. Attuned to Genji's facile and sentimental amorousness, the polygynous privilege of his rank permits him to maintain two other recognized consorts, one aristocratic mistress, and an amazing variety of incidental affairs of the heart (the phrase is exact, for Genji requires to be loved).

Though his career at Court is blighted for a time by his father's death and he is eventually forced into exile, he returns, after a few years of peaceful rusticity among friends and retainers, more powerful than ever; and his power increases steadily until in the last decade or more of his life he is the unchallenged political leader of his country, Chief Councillor of the reigning Emperor and granted the unprecedented honor of elevation to a rank equivalent to that of former Emperors, in a society in which Emperors not infrequently resign without sacrifice of great influence and respect. Ryozen, one of his sons, becomes Emperor; and the other, Yugiri, Chief Councillor after his father's death. Through Genji's influence, the daughter of his mistress becomes Empress to Ryozen; and his own daughter, the Empress of a succeeding Emperor. Genji dies at the height of his power and Apollonian reputation, full of honors and worldly accomplishments, mourned universally as the symbol of vigor and grace and splendor, the beautiful hero-prince to the end.

But the image, in the first chapter, of the mourning Emperor is an introduction and a portent of other consequences of vitality and beauty. After Genji's mother dies, even the constant Emperor turns for solace, finally, to another consort, a young princess who resembles the lady mourned. The spoiled young prince, petted and indulged by the ladies of the Court, learns to "set his heart upon possessing, even at the cost of endless difficulties, whatever

custom and circumstance seemed to have placed beyond his utmost reach" (196): when he falls in love for the first time, it is with his father's new consort; and the son Fujitsubo bears, to become Emperor without ancestral right years later, is Genji's. This is the guilty secret—consequence of "this love that was a perpetual disaster" (133)—known only to Genji and Fujitsubo and, at last, to their son after he has become Emperor, which Genji carries with him through all his involvements and uneasy phillanderings, which shadows his most transient liaisons (though it never has the power to prevent them) and makes him often yearn with a luxurious self-pity for the renunciatory simplicities of a monastic life he can never quite bring himself to accept.

Princess Aoi, "the very perfection of . . . [whose] beauty . . . seemed only to make all intimacy with her the more impossible" (37), is hardly permitted to be a wife to her roving husband at all, except, ironically, in presenting him with the only son he knows and can acknowledge as his own. The marriage disintegrates in a scene that Genji, filled with guilt, anger, and awakening desire, precipitates in her "supremely well-ordered house" (92):

" . . . Why are you so cold and distant and proud? Year after year we fail to reach an understanding and you cut yourself off from me more completely than before. Can we not manage for a little while to be on ordinary terms? It seems rather strange, considering how ill I have been, that you should not attempt to enquire after my health. Or rather, it is exactly what I should expect; but nevertheless I find it extremely painful." "Yes," said Aoi, "it is extremely painful when people do not care what becomes of one." She glanced back over her shoulder as she spoke, her face full of scorn and pride, looking uncommonly handsome as she did so. "You hardly ever speak," said Genji, "and when you do, it is only to say unkind things and twist one's harmless words so that they seem to be insults. And when I try to find some way of helping you for a while at least to be a little less disagreeable, you become more hopelessly unapproachable than ever. Shall I one day succeed in making you understand. . . ?" and so saying he went into their bedroom. She did not follow him. He lay for a while in a state of great annoyance and distress. But, probably because he did not really care about her very much one way or the other, he soon became drowsy and all sorts of quite different matters drifted through his head. (93)

And he begins to think about the little girl he is planning, with a kind of perverse paternal sensuality, to take from her home and raise for purposes he will not yet define for himself.

Genji's second wife, Princess Nyosan, is forced on him in his middle age by his sense of obligation to her father, the former Emperor; and Genji, for the sake of his own voluntary attachments leaving her as lonely and unloved as he had left Aoi, discovers that the son she will bear is not his:

"It does not in the least surprise me that you should feel as you do. For one thing, novelties are inevitably more interesting, and you have known me since you were a child. But the real trouble is that I am too old for you. It is true. I am hideously old. Indeed, what in the world could be more natural than that an infant like you should desire to escape from me? . . ."

But as he said the words he caught in his own voice a familiar intonation. How often, years ago, those responsible for his upbringing had adopted just this tone, and how dreary, how contemptible he had thought their self-righteous homilies! "Boring old man!" That was what she must be thinking, and in sudden shame he relapsed into a complete silence. . . . (674)

For Genji—lying, self-deceiving, self-excusing, pointlessly and ineffectually remorseful—has moments of self-revelation also; and he never consciously wishes to hurt. He cannot bear, in fact, to fail in acts of kindness toward any woman who has taken him, however briefly, as a lover; and though this kindness feeds on day-dreams of sybaritic domesticity—

"If only I had some large convenient building . . . where I could house these friends of mine and be able to keep an eye not only on them, but on any babies that might chance to get born, how much simpler life would be!" (294)

—it is nevertheless a kindness (and remorse) that embraces even women whom he has loved with embarrassment and no pleasure, homely neglected ladies pitifully coquetting him into affairs, and whom—like the shy Princess Suyetsumu with the long red-tipped nose, "uniquely depressing and wearisome creature [that] she was" (473)—he feels obliged to maintain, if they allow him, in

comfort and dignity "since it was certain that no one else intended to take the business off his hands" (473). The author is not, then, altogether ironical when she remarks on Genji's "constancy" toward the women of his more casual affairs:

Being women of character and position they had no false pride and saw that it was worth while to take what they could get. Thus without any ill will on either side concerning the future or the past they would enjoy the pleasure of each other's company, and so part. However, if by chance anyone resented this kind of treatment and cooled towards him, Genji was never in the least surprised; for though, as far as feelings went, perfectly constant himself, he had long ago learnt that such constancy was very unusual. (228)

Life is never simple for Genji, capable as he is, at disconcerting moments, of a wry self-recognition, as when he overhears his own tiresome middle-aged voice upbraiding Nyosan or finds himself mirrored in the tranquil spirit of the Lady from the Village of Falling Flowers:

"We are both singularly fortunate . . . I, in my capacity for self-delusion; she in hers for good-tempered acceptance of whatever comes her way." (469)

—capable, besides, of recognizing the horror of casual aging and of the irretrievable past:

"It's very rusty," said the old porter dolefully, fumbling all the while with the lock that grated with an unpleasant sound but would not turn. "There's nothing else wrong with it, but it's terribly rusty. No one uses this gate now."

The words, ordinary enough in themselves, filled Genji with an unaccountable depression. How swiftly the locks rust, the hinges grow stiff on doors that close behind us! "I am more than thirty," he thought; and it seemed to him impossible to go on doing things just as though they would last . . . as though people would remember . . . "And yet," he said to himself, "I know that even at this moment the sight of something very beautiful, were it only some common flower or tree, might in an instant make life again seem full of meaning and reality." (390)

Beauty, though customarily not the beauty of flowers or trees,

is in fact enough to divert Genji from any "unaccountable" mood of depression, penitence, or futility: he is never free of the itch of amorousness, which has the power to keep him busy, scheming, unthoughtful, and entertained until its consequences drive him back into gloom or the aridity of self-contemplation. As a kind of ingratiating, perennially adolescent Don Juan, either titillated or remorseful, Genji has, unluckily, more persevering reasons for remorse. His affections are sincere and extensive, as well as superficial and temporary; and the cross-currents of these qualities are always imperilling whatever tentative equilibrium of spirit he has managed to achieve. "How it grieves me," he writes in a mood of bewildered repentance to Murasaki², "to remember the many occasions when I have spoilt our friendship for the sake of some passing whim or fancy in which (though you could not believe it) my deeper feelings were not at all engaged. . . ." (273)

From the union of his gifts of beauty and unspecific amorousness comes one of his numerous recurring predicaments: to have plural affections and (at least a few) constant, jealous women. One of these women who "misunderstand" him is Princess Aoi. Another is his high-born mistress, the proud and demanding Lady Rokujo—"he had the greatest possible sympathy for her; but he was feeling rather tired of coping with injured susceptibilities" (159)—and she is able to revenge herself by causing the deaths, through the unconscious possessing spirit of her hatred, of Genji's plebeian mistress, Yugao; of Aoi; and, at last, of his favorite consort, Murasaki. Even Murasaki, who gives Genji his only experience of ordered, intimate domestic life and talk, and who loves him in spite of her clear-sighted appraisal of his moods and impulses, is tormented by his infidelities, which she can understand without being able to shield herself against them.

Genji drifts always in the current of his alert, nostalgic, hospitable sensuality. It overcomes him, typically, when he undertakes, after Rokujo's death, the guardianship of her daughter:

One day when the autumn rain was falling steadily and the dripping flowers in the garden seemed to be washed to one dull tinge of grey,

²"Murasaki" is not only the name of the author but the name she gives to her heroine. To avoid confusion I give the author her title of "Lady Murasaki" whenever it seems necessary to name her at all.

memories of long-forgotten things came crowding one after another to Genji's mind, and with eyes full of tears he betook himself to Lady Akikonomu's rooms. . . . He leant upon the pillar of her seat, the evening light falling upon him as he turned towards her. They had many memories in common; did she still recall, he asked, that terrible morning when he came to visit her mother at the Palace-in-the-Fields? "Too much my thoughts frequent those vanished days," she quoted, and her eyes filled with tears. Already he was thinking her handsome and interesting, when for some reason she rose and shifted her position, using her limbs with a subtle grace that made him long to see her show them to better advantage. . . ." (378f)

But Genji's attempt to make his usual conquest, using the life-is-sad-and-gather-ye-rosebuds theme (which he has the gift to believe in), does not work, and leaves him this time as remorseful and provoked as he is usually remorseful and sated. His campaign against another unresponsive protégée, Tamakatsura, has a more permanent disagreeable consequence: to drive her into an unhappy marriage as the quickest escape from his importunities.

His sensuality has even political consequences. Having allowed himself to drift into an affair with one of the Emperor's concubines, he continues it incautiously at the home of her father, an influential court adviser, until accidentally discovered by the discourteous old man:

Yes, there was Genji's paper lying conspicuously upon the floor. Were there no means of heading her father away from it? She could think of none and did not attempt to answer his question. It was evident that she was acutely embarrassed, and even though she was his own child he ought to have remembered that she was now a lady of some consequence, whose feelings, however reprehensible might be her conduct, he was bound in some measure to respect. Unfortunately there was not in his nature a particle either of moderation or restraint. He stooped to pick up the paper, and as he did so, without the slightest hesitation or compunction he opened the bed-curtains and peered right in. There full length upon the bed and apparently quite at his ease lolled a charming young man, who when the curtain stirred merely rolled quietly over and hid his face in the pillows. Enraged, astonished as the Minister was, even he had not quite the courage to press the discovery home. Blind with fury he thrust the paper into his pocket and rushed out of the room.

Genji was indeed extremely concerned about the consequences of this incident, coming as it did in the wake of so many other indiscretions. But his first care was to comfort his companion, which he did as best he could. (223)

The immediate result is that Genji, fearing the use his enemies at court will make of the scandal, confirms his decision to go into exile. Yet wherever he goes, at whatever degree he finds himself on the political wheel of fortune, his present is full of emotional intrigues and anxieties; and even this abundant present is too limited, it overflows with his jealously minute retention of past feelings:

Suddenly, as he drove away, there came into his mind a picture of this lady dancing with four others at the Palace. Yes, that was who she was. She had been one of the Gosechi dancers one winter long ago. How much he had admired her! And for a moment he felt about her exactly as he had felt before. It was this strange capacity of his for re-creating in its full intensity an emotion suspended for months or even years and overlaid by a thousand intervening distractions, that gained for him, faithless though he was, so large a number of persistent admirers. (277)

If this fairy-tale prince, rescued from his void and subjected to the pressing, entangling actualness of human relationships, has so little luck and so much vexation with his women, the reader may be tempted to shift the analogy to more sophisticated mythical constructions and imagine him a great amoral progenitor, Zeus-like in the immediacy, range, and transience of his liaisons as well as in divinely careless fertility, scattering heroic offspring over all the earth. But again, the facts are unaccommodating. Having expended decades of energy upon scores of women, Genji is able to produce three children. One of these, Ryozen, must remain unacknowledged, and becomes Emperor as the heir of his presumed father, the old Emperor (for Genji has, with one variety of divine carelessness, cuckolded his own father). Genji's daughter, the Princess Akashi, becomes through his influence Empress in a succeeding reign and the mother of his royal grandson. Yugiri, the only son that Genji acknowledges, becomes the most influential non-royal personage at court after his father's death. Yet

there are no heroes, sexual or otherwise, among them; and even their worldly success is qualified by a sort of personal meagerness never characteristic, whatever his defects, of Genji. The Princess Akashi turns placidly from inconspicuous girlhood to contented royal motherhood, and appears at last only as a mild worrier about her son. Ryozen, a correct and uninspired ruler until he discovers the secret of his birth, lapses into a prevailing mood of guilt and melancholy, and eventually resigns the office he knows it has been sacrilegious (according to the cult of ancestors) for him ever to have held. Yugiri is the most interesting of the three, not only because—unlike the others—he is given the space and detail of a major character, but because, as well as being Genji's son, he is plainly the consequence and proof of Genji's sins and errors.

Yugiri grows up in the shadow of his illustrious father; but the pressures of public scrutiny and public expectation seem at first not to disconcert him: he is a "sensible, good-natured boy, who took life rather seriously" (405). Genji, fearful that Yugiri will be unpopular at court if his honors come too easily, has him appointed, on his coming of age, to a relatively humble grade of imperial preferment. Policy overrules affection, or rather in this instance readily supplants it; for the temperamental differences between the casual father and the solemn son have always been clear to both, and there is never anything more than a perfunctory, formal affection between them. The differences are ultimately too considerable to be borne by Yugiri. His feelings, waiting for a pretext, find a useful one in the difficulties of his first love affair. He falls in love with his childhood playmate, Kumoi; but her father has court ambitions for her, and breaks off the relationship. One reason Yugiri can find, in his smothered fury, for this misfortune is the low rank to which Genji has, as he feels, condemned him: Kumoi and her father would respect him more, he would indeed be acceptable as her husband, if Genji had not humiliated him. From the time of this event and for the rest of his life Yugiri is the more or less deliberate, always resentful opponent and competitor of his own sardonic image of Genji.

Nothing helps change Yugiri's mind, not even his eventual reconciliation with Kumoi after her father has lost hope of establishing her at court. Yugiri sets himself up—against the trivial philanderer Genji—as a model of fidelity and the domestic vir-

tues; he is taken by the world at his own ostentatiously modest valuation, and by his good-natured father also: "Yugiri is a faithful fellow," (619) says Genji with rueful admiration, rejecting the possibility that Yugiri would think of marrying, for excellent political reasons, the daughter of a former Emperor and so bringing a rival to Kumoi into his household.

Yet the faithful fellow assuages his grief at having (apparently) lost Kumoi by becoming almost at once infatuated with a dancer, who in the course of their liaison bears him several children. After he has regained Kumoi and lived as an exclusively domestic husband for some years, he is moved by a sudden and violent passion for the Princess Ochiba, another daughter of the same former Emperor, and eventually brings her into his household as his preferred consort. But his great love is elsewhere and unacknowledged. Having caught an unobserved glimpse of Murasaki (she is, of course, strictly sequestered, and it takes a typhoon to level the screens that keep her invisible to her husband's son), he falls in love with her.

Yugiri's love for Murasaki, which he never mentions or acts upon, is perhaps the only fact that prevents him from being fixed as a decisively unsympathetic character. The author's irony, especially on call at moments when somebody seems about to act uncharacteristically, is at its most exquisite when she describes the compulsive discreetness of Yugiri's daydreams:

It was characteristic of Yugiri's high sense of propriety that when in his imaginings he became better acquainted with this lovely creature, it was not with Murasaki herself but with someone in every respect exactly like her that he pictured himself spending hours of enchanted bliss. (531)

Yet Murasaki must also serve him as evidence against his father:

It was heart-rending that the most beautiful woman of her generation should fall to the lot of one whose other intimacies proved him so completely lacking in discrimination. (531)

In the great tragic scene of Murasaki's death, the last sight of her beauty is enough, for at least the period of bereavement, to bring Yugiri as close to his father as he ever will be:

The daylight was still feeble, and he could see very little. But at that moment Genji himself held up the great lamp, bringing it so close to the couch that Yugiri suddenly saw her in all her loveliness. "And why should he not see her?" thought Genji, who knew that Yugiri was peeping. But in a moment he covered his eyes with his sleeve. "It is almost worse to see her now, while she is still unchanged," he said. "One thinks that she will speak, move. . . ." Yugiri brushed away the tears that kept on dimming his eyes. Her hair lay spread across the pillows, loose, but not tangled or disorderly, in a great mass, against which in the strong lamplight her face shone with a dazzling whiteness. Never, thought Genji, had her beauty seemed so flawless as now, when the eye could rest upon it undistracted by any ripple of sound or motion. Yugiri gazed astounded. His spirit seemed to leave him, to float through space and hover near her, as though it were he that was the ghost, and this the lovely body he had chosen for his habitation. (732)

* * *

For many days afterwards he remained in close attendance upon his father, trying by every means he could think of to distract and console him. The equinoctial gales had begun to blow, and tonight it came back vividly to Yugiri's mind how he had caught sight of her on the morning of the great typhoon. And then again on the day she died. That Genji should mourn was well enough; but what right had Yugiri to this grievous pain? And to hide his sorrow he drew a rosary towards him, and clicking the beads loudly he muttered, "Amida, Amida, Amida Buddha," so swiftly that the falling of his tears could not be heard. (733)

It is too late, however; Genji is soon dead, and Yugiri is already what he is, regardless of momentary faltering under the weight of disaster. He grows old into a kind of severe and undecayed Polonius, full of schemes and moralistic admonitions: Niou, Genji's grandson, gives us the image of "His Excellency always fussing round to see whether I am behaving myself" (837). It is the fussy old man, having suppressed in himself as well as he could and piously disavowed the "looseness" he decried in his father, who inherits most of the honors and privileges, though none of the glory, of his father; it is Yugiri who lives on more and more confirmed in his impenetrable sanctimony, who inherits and in fact populates with his numerous progeny—as the sunlike hero Genji ought to have populated—the world.

Even Niou, the grandson who deceptively resembles Genji and who will inherit the throne, is only the contrary, within the same moral constriction, of his uncle Yugiri. For all his charm and beauty, Niou is the heedless and unremorseful, the essentially indelicate and indiscriminating sensualist that Yugiri has self-righteously imagined in his father. The credulous Kaoru, arguing in behalf of Niou before a lady his friend desires, succeeds mainly in substantiating our impression of Niou's unlovely qualities:

" . . . He is . . . the sort of man who if a woman took things as they came, did not set herself and her reputation on a pinnacle, was broad-minded and willing to take the world as she found it, overlooking casual shortcomings here and there and accepting a certain number of unpleasantnesses as inevitable in any relationship—to such a woman I believe Niou might show a most uncommon degree of fidelity. . . ." (833)

Niou has no objection to making half-serious overtures to his sister—"How loath am I that alien hands should tear from fresh and tender roots the plant I may not touch!" (878)—and rape is for him only the logical extreme of his philosophy of action:

. . . Niou was holding her fast in his arms before she could so much as utter a cry. The preliminaries, he considered, had already been got over at the Nijo-in; here he could let himself go. . . . She burst into tears. For a very different reason Niou too was weeping; she had proved even more desirable than he expected, and he was profoundly depressed at the thought that he might never have such an opportunity again. (1005f)

The seed of Genji, so seldom fertile, seems to deteriorate in taking root: scruples become calculation, energy is channeled into mean appetite, generosity of spirit atrophies, and the subtle and warm-hearted responsiveness of Genji—for Genji is an ardent connoisseur of the beautiful things he desires—vanishes altogether with his death.

For Kaoru alone, among those whom Genji has sheltered and who survive him—Kaoru, whom the world regards as his son but who is born to prove that even Genji can be cuckold as well as cuckold—Genji's image survives as a uniqueness touched with divinity. And it is for Kaoru, appropriately, that this past and

dead magnificence leaves to the present only shadows and the terrible weight of futility, as if everything in the world has been done and no purpose remains:

"Genji's death . . . happening when I was a mere child made— I now think in looking back upon it—a disastrous impression upon me. I grew up feeling that nothing was stable, nothing worth while. . . ." (829f)

Kaoru has Genji's gift of self-contemplation, but it is obsessed by the sense of failure and the guilt—once he learns that Genji is not his father—of holding an unearned station in the world. When he falls in love, it is with someone very like himself; and there is only a single love scene between the shy pair, who have spent a virtuous night in eager conversation:

"This is what I ask for, this and nothing more," he said. "For you and I have the same feelings about such things—moonlight, flowers, the sky, all the subtle changes that go on in the world about us—and should never be unhappy so long as we could watch them together." (847)

But she sends him off, and there is nothing more till he comes to watch her die.

Kaoru survives her death, as he survives everything else to the end of the story, yearning wistfully after worldliness and demonstrating for himself its futility, envying Niou's impersonal flares of appetite and coming deliberately and impartially to judge Niou for what he is. Even when he finds another girl to match the one he has lost, he loses her also, first to the insatiable Niou and at the very end to her vows as a Buddhist nun. The ultimate irony is that, loving her still but despising her for her surrender to Niou, Kaoru believes that her vows are false and that she is being kept in plausible seclusion by a new, more ingenious lover. And, at this moment of Kaoru's crowning (and unjustified) disillusion—the disillusion that confirms his view of the instability and pointlessness of things—the whole great action of the story comes to rest.

Vitality—even so irresistible as Genji's—cannot propagate itself: the novel runs down in a coarsening of impulses and a narrowing of choice, as with Niou and Yugiri; at last in a paralysis of moral bafflement, as with Kaoru; always a denial of the variety

and abundance that Genji finds, creates, and is. The memory of Genji's vitality is stronger than the lives of his survivors: he has been dead for many years, but the momentum of his vitality persists even in his failure to pass it on. It is often a protective, negative vitality, defining by contrast the ungenerousness of Yugiri, exposing in their inconsequence the intrigues of Niou and of Genji himself, overwhelming the glum, speciously vindicated inertia of Kaoru, sustaining without inflexibility the steady pressures of a vigorous civilization upon the responsible and representative man.

Still more attractively, it can be positive, almost absolute. The most characteristic unencumbered expression of Genji's vitality is—for this statesman, social lion, and incorrigible lover—not political, or social, or even sensual, but domestic: in his lives with the three women who can instruct him, in their various ways, to be at his ease, liberated for the moment from sensuality and remorse and the expectations of the world.

Yugao, the plebeian girl who first pleases Genji by introducing him to the romance and diversion of classlessness, is able to introduce him also, most imperceptibly, to the atmosphere of domesticity:

Their room was in the front of the house. Genji got up and opened the long sliding shutters. They stood together looking out. In the courtyard near them was a clump of fine Chinese bamboos; dew lay thick on the borders, glittering here no less brightly than in the great gardens to which Genji was better accustomed. There was a confused buzzing of insects. Crickets were chirping in the wall. He had often listened to them, but always at a distance; now, singing so close to him, they made a music which was unfamiliar and indeed seemed far lovelier than that with which he was acquainted. . . . She was wearing a white bodice with a soft, grey cloak over it. It was a poor dress, but she looked charming and almost distinguished; even so, there was nothing very striking in her appearance—only a certain fragile grace and elegance. (63f)

And it is especially after her death that Genji, coping again with tempestuous women, summons up regretfully this image of comfortable domesticity:

He longed to escape once more from the claims of these passionate and

exacting natures, and renew the life of tender intimacy which for a while had given him so great a happiness. (109)

Yugao's comfortableness is for Genji spiced with romantic mystery and consecrated by the brevity of their affair; but the Lady from the Village of Falling Flowers has no such advantages. She is brought into Genji's household early and lives there in a sort of voluntary retirement, helping with equable good sense to raise his children, offering him always the refuge of her mildness and tranquillity as they talk "for a long while, chiefly of old times" (469), till he finds he must be on his way to another wing of his palace and another of his ladies.

If the undemanding Lady from the Village of Falling Flowers—she remains, appropriately, without a name in the story—is for Genji the type of domesticity, Murasaki is its demanding apotheosis. Murasaki is a refuge and a comfort, she allows Genji to relax and talk himself out, to come to her for advice, to be freely himself; but she is also, in independence of spirit and acuteness of observation, the only woman he ever meets who is a match for him.

Their relationship grows into a genuine marriage almost in spite of Genji. It starts even less promisingly than usual, as Genji's familiar generalized itch of amorousness is excited, this time, by a little girl who does not understand his advances and who withdraws into a sulk when he takes early advantage of his position as her "guardian". But she is soon reconciled to her ingratiating lover, who in turn gradually comes to find her more than a charming, exploitable child. Murasaki becomes Genji's recognized consort (she can never, because she was born a commoner, become his legitimate wife); and, barely out of childhood, she is already interesting and attractive enough to hold his attention as Aoi, for example, never could. Even though Genji continues to let his attention wander, he comes to feel more and more explicitly that Murasaki is the center of his life: a feeling that begins to strengthen into conviction while he is separated from her in exile. By the time Genji has settled all his consorts into his new palace, the pattern of his permanent relationships is clear: Yugao is the enshrined memory; the Lady from the Village of Falling Flowers is the calm, almost impersonal refuge; and Murasaki is the affectionate, spirited, and justifiably ironical wife who can at last, by

her charm and the force and complexity of her affection, induce the glorious philanderer to limit little by little, most reluctantly, his interest in other women.

Genji never altogether renounces the roving eye, as if with a residue of professional pride; he always retains the power to hurt Murasaki by his infidelities and his deceit, often a self-deceit, in disavowing them. It is not, in fact, till he has spent his honeymoon with Princess Nyosan that he comes to recognize how engaged his feelings really are:

... he now felt how unique Murasaki was. Surely his adoption of her was the one step in his life that he would never have cause to regret. Such time as he spent with Nyosan (whether by day or night) he found himself grudging more and more, till he was frightened at his own increasing inability to live more than an hour or two on end in any but Murasaki's company. (632f)

If Murasaki can never bring herself to rejoice in Genji's somewhat qualified candor regarding his affairs past and present, it is nevertheless their sustained intimacy that encourages him to be nostalgically candid, even about what has been one of his two burdensome secrets:

... he told her the whole story of his dealings with Yugao. It was apparent to her that he was deeply moved, and at the same time that he took great pleasure in recalling every detail of their relationship. "... such love as Yugao's, such utter self-forgetfulness, so complete a surrender of the whole being to one single and ever-present emotion—I have never seen or heard of, and were she alive she would certainly be occupying no less important a place in my palace than, for example, the Lady of Akashi is occupying today. . . ." "Were she as much in your good graces as the Lady of Akashi, she would have nothing to complain of . . ." broke in Murasaki suddenly; for the Akashi episode still rankled. . . . (458)

Genji is all-important to her, and she becomes indispensable to him; but the weight of his unacknowledgeable sin and of the wasted years is as heavy upon him as the weight of his deceptions and trivial lecheries and their childlessness upon her. They speak to each other, on her last birthday, with a bare alogical frankness, as if to themselves:

. . . presently he said: "What a strange life mine has been! I suppose few careers have ever appeared outwardly more brilliant; but I have never been happy. Person after person that I cared for has in one way or another been taken from me. It is long since I lost all zest for life, and if I have been condemned to continue my existence, it is (I sometimes think) only as a punishment for certain misdeeds that at all times still lie heavily on my mind. You alone have always been here to console me, and I am glad to think that, apart from the time when I was away at Akashi, I have never behaved in such a way as to cause you a moment's real unhappiness. . . . It is only with people such as you, whom I have known all their lives, that I am really happy. . . . About Princess Nyosan . . . since she came, I have grown even fonder of you than before; a change you would have noticed quickly enough, if it had been my affection towards someone else that was on the increase! However, you are very observant, and I cannot believe you are not perfectly well aware. . . ." "I cannot explain it," she said. "I know that to any outside person I must appear the happiest of women—fortunate indeed far above my deserts. But inwardly I am wretched. . . . Every day. . . ." She felt it would take a long time to explain, and had not the courage. (651)

Murasaki dies, and Genji is as inconsolable as perhaps it is possible for him to be. Yet he cannot quite make the decision to withdraw from the world into a monastic life; the world has held him too long and continues to tempt him still, even into another trivial lechery:

It so happened that as Genji came along towards the eastern wing he found Chujo no Kimi taking a hurried sleep. She rose quickly when she heard his step, and in the moment that elapsed before she hid her face in the wide sleeve of her gown he had time to note the liveliness of her features, the fine poise of her head. . . . (740)

Finally persuaded, as he thinks, to renounce the world, he celebrates his last religious festival "with unusual solemnity, for he knew that it was the last he would see in his Palace" (742):

This was the first occasion since Murasaki's death upon which Genji had mingled with his guests. They thought him more beautiful than ever, and the aged priest could not refrain from tears of joy.

Remembering that this was the end of the year, little Niou went

scampering about saying everyone must do something to scare away the demons and asking what noise he might make. In a few days Genji would see the child no more; and sadly he recited the verse: "Whilst I in heedless grief have let the days go by, together now the year and my own life are ebbing to their close." He gave orders that the New Year ceremonies should be performed with more than usual splendour, and saw to it that the princes and Court officers who came to the Palace should receive such presents and bounties as never before. (743)

But nothing, ultimately, works out as Genji has planned it, not even his long postponed decision. Soon, having botched and qualified every grand gesture he has felt obliged to make, having spent his unexampled vitality too generously with everybody else and not quite generously enough with the one who alone could engage and renew it, the man of sensibility, the remorseful Don Juan, the great lover spoiled by an uneasy conscience and the sense of something lost, the gifted and dazzling fairy-tale prince "'whose like'"—says the Emperor Suzaku—" 'has never been seen in the world before' " (617), is dead, and leaves the world to those who—like Niou and Yugiri—will narrow it down to the breadth of their appetites or who—like Kaoru—too honest to alter it, will drown in its multitudinousness. Genji, and the age of marvels, are gone.

WILLIAM ARROWSMITH

Translations from Hitomaro

ODE AT THE TIME OF THE TEMPORARY INTERMENT OF
PRINCESS ASUKA AT KINOË

They have raised you a bridge of stone
in the upper shoals of Asuka.
The birds glance on the water.
They have built you a bridge of wood
in the lower shoals of Asuka.
And the weeds that spring from the stone
are cut but grow again.
And the grass that grows on the wood
is withered but grows again.
But you, my princess, why have you
gone from the evening palace,
gone from the morning halls
of your lovely lord
on whom you leaned
when you lay together
as the river reed leans on the wave?
Like tall grass I see you standing.
I see you still with the living,
in spring with flowers,
with leaves for fall.
Deep as one looks in a mirror
you looked on your lord,
and were not full, finding him
more and more marvelous
like the fifth-month moon.
You locked your sleeves to his,
and time upon time together
you went with your lord
to the shrine of Kinoë,
bearing in cups the holy wine.
And now Kinoë is your shrine.
I see you still with the living,
and all my words are unwoven.
The duck-wild eyes die away.

Oh, when I see your lord
who goes on loving alone
like a mandarin drake,
who comes and goes
like the bird of morning,
bent down with longing,
as summer grass is bent,
rising here, setting there,
like the evening star,
and his wild heart tossed
like a little shallop,
what could I say,
what should I know?
There is only the sound and the name.
These are endless, like heaven and earth.
We shall go to the stream of Asuka,
the river that runs with your name,
and adore for ten thousand years
 our loveliest princess.

A NAGA-UTA ON THE DEATH OF HIS WIFE

There on the road to Karu
(Karu, called for the mallards),
my love, my sister, lived
and I desired to see her.
But too many eyes
and eyes too curious
forbade my coming.
For still our love was secret,
and the ways of love were hidden
like a fountain in the rocks
or a little flame in flint.
And now the flame is out,
for she I loved is gone,
who leaned sleeping against me
as the seaweed leans on the wave,
gone like splendid October,
a ripeness from the days.

This is the news the runner brings,
news like the twang of the yew-wood bow.
I hear the words, but cannot speak,
nor comfort find, nor rest,
nor hope, nor endure such words.

So I go the road to Karu
where she watched for my coming.
I go the road and listen,
straining for a voice,
but hear only the wild geese
screaming over Unebi,
and the people that throng
the spear of the road.
I meet them and scan their faces,
but see no face like hers.
For this is left of love:
to cry her name
to wave my sleeve.

Falling on hillpaths
the red leaves cloud the way.
I seek my love who wanders.
I cannot find the path,
and the mountain is unknown.

Through the ruddy fall,
the red leaves falling on,
I see the runner still.
I see a meeting-day
although we meet no more.

GRIEF AFTER THE MOUNTAIN-CROSSING OF THE PRINCE

The haze rises. The spring evening is woven.
And I am lost. I have no way. I have no words:
ingrown in grief, dumb like the nightjar.
Could I tongue my grief, loosen the sleeves of speech!

O the wind that blew up at the mountain-crossing of our great
lord
blows, and blows back, evening and morning, lapping my sleeves!
And I am lost, like a man undone, going a journey
but going in grass, without words, and the way lost,
and a grief in my guts
like the salt-burning of the fisher-girls of Tsumu.

EARL ROY MINER

The Technique of Japanese Poetry

“Genji and the Emperor discussed all manner of things together, including their Chinese studies. . . . They then repeated to one another such poems of gallantry as they had lately addressed to ladies of the court.”

—*The Tale of Genji*, III, ii.

AFTER MORE THAN A CENTURY of contact with Japan, Japanese lyric poetry remains largely an unknown quantity to all but a few Western readers. The purpose of this article on *waka* is to make something of a start towards explaining the inner workings of Japanese poetic technique and the assumptions about life and poetry which are necessary if the peculiar accomplishment of Japanese lyric poetry is to be properly appreciated. Admittedly, no essay of this length can hope to explain twelve centuries of poetry, and two assumptions underlie the remarks which follow—first, that Japanese poetry may be adequately discussed in modern English critical vocabulary and, second, that a highly schematic analysis does not distort Japanese poetry unduly. The poetry dealt with here is *waka*, *tanka*, or *uta*, as the genre is alternatively called. Some remarks about Japanese prosody in general will serve to introduce the literary and philosophical problems raised by this short, lyric form.

The classical rhythm of Japanese poetry alternates lines of five and seven syllables, as we see in the translation of Gray’s “Elegy”, which begins,

Ya ma ya ma ka su mi
I ri a i no
Ka ne wa na ri tsu tsu
No no na ka wa
Sbi zu ka ni a yu mi
Ka e ri yu ku . . .

The rhythms come from the alteration of the varying line lengths, from playing them against the sounds of the words, and from the varying emphasis necessary to express the meaning of the words. Waka employs these rhythms, in a form of but thirty-one syllables in all, in lines of five, seven, and five syllables followed by a seven-syllable couplet:

Ka su mi ta tsu (5)
Ha ru no ya ma be wa (7)
Tō . . ke re do (5)
Fu ki ku ru ka ze wa (7)
Ha na no ka zo su ru. (7)

The vowel of the first syllable of the third line is a "long" vowel, and is counted as two syllables. Some waka, especially the older ones, have lines with extra syllables, but these are usually in places which suggest elision by synthesis of vowel sounds. Some idea of the sound of the Japanese may be gained by pronouncing the transliterated lines above with as little accent or stress as possible, by giving the vowels the sounds they have in Italian or Spanish, and the consonants the sounds which they have in English, except for the "r's", which are "flapped" with the tongue.

Grouping the syllables of this poem into their meaningful word-clusters (as the Japanese do not) produces:

<i>Kasumi tatsu</i>	(The) mist-rises
<i>Haru no yama-be wa</i>	spring's mountain-sides
<i>Tōkeredo</i>	(are) far, but
<i>Fuki-kuru kaze wa</i>	(the) blows-comes breeze
<i>Hana no ka zo suru.</i>	flowers' fragrance (!) gives.

Or, in English prose syntax: "(The) spring's mountainsides (which) raise up mist (are) far away, but (the) breeze (which) blows (and) comes (from there) gives off (a) fragrance of flowers." This poem illustrates four points about the language: it contains no articles; instead of employing relative pronouns, "relative" verbs "modify" nouns in an adjectival way; adjectives are conjugated like verbs; and the inflections of nouns and pronouns are indicated by post-positive particles (*ga*, *no*, *wo*, etc.)

which may serve otherwise as signs of intensification or exclamation.

The Western reader who is unaccustomed to these short poems is likely to accept the prosody on faith and raise other questions. The first one to occur to a reader who assumes that the *Iliad*, *Hamlet*, and "The Wasteland" are poetic norms is probably whether or not these thirty-one syllable groupings constitute poetry at all. Surely it is sufficient answer to say that the Japanese—who are willing to sit through dramas which last for days—have received poetic satisfaction from waka for a period extending back to their pre-history. But there is a more meaningful way of posing the same question, a way which leads to a consideration of the technique of the poetry. How do waka poets overcome the restrictive limits of their form? It would seem that there are three answers. First, Japanese poets use almost every imaginable technique to transcend or overcome the limits of brevity they begin by accepting, and second, they confine themselves to themes which can be treated in thirty-one syllables with the techniques available. The third answer points in a somewhat different direction from technique, but is of equal importance—Japanese poetry is a continuing body of tradition, conventions, and assumptions between poets and readers unlike anything in western poetry.

Looking first at those techniques by which waka emancipates itself from its limits, one sees that they are not basically different from western techniques of imagery, metaphorical statement, allegory, symbolism, verbal and syntactical dexterity, generalization, and use of the literary tradition. On the other hand, the degree of concentration of these techniques in Japanese poetry and the literary and philosophical conventions which the poetry assumes are very different from western literary practice, as we can see in this poem by Oshikōchi no Mitsune (c. 900).

*Hatsu-kari no
Hatsuka ni koe wo
Kikishi yori
Naka-zora ni nomi
Mono omou kana.*

*Dimly in its flight,
Dinning through the air,
The first departing goose
Has directed all my yearning
To the deepening middle sky.*

The amount of alliteration and assonance in this poem would sound ridiculous in a highly stressed language like English, but

here the "ah" and "oh" sounds following the "h's" and "k's" in the first two lines beautifully echo the sense of geese heard from high overhead, and all the more since the first three syllables of the first two lines are identical. The fourth line is harsher, to describe the emotional tumult, and the fifth line ends in a euphony which well expresses the state of tender melancholy which the words describe.

If the euphony defies the translator, the "goose" and the "middle sky" defy the critic. Are these images, symbols, or what? The question would probably be irrelevant to a Japanese, who would insist that everybody knows that the sound of the first goose honking overhead is very beautiful but also very sad. It is not so much a device as an observed fact. We Western readers are dealing, then, with a different culture and a different poetic; whether image or symbol or metaphor, "the first goose" has a traditional value or meaning which is redefined and restated in the context of each new poem, as here, where it is probably also allegorical of the voice of the poet's beloved. "Natural imagery" is perhaps the best term for this metaphorical language, since the poets write from observation of nature and in a centuries-old poetic and religious tradition of mingled animism, Buddhism, and Taoism.

Various typical uses of natural imagery may be understood from an examination of four poems. In a poem very much in the ancient manner, such as this next one by Yamabe no Akahito (c. 700), we have simple expression of experience. The experience includes three natural images: the Shore of Tago, "Fuji's lofty height", and newly fallen snow. The high quality of this poem dealing with the much described mountain lies in the freshness of the contrast between the sea, with its associations of motion, and the mountain, with its associations of stability, and in the communication of the poet's excitement on seeing Mt. Fuji as he apparently never had before, with a blanket of glistening snow. The poem is also esteemed for what Dr. Johnson called the "strength" of the language.

Tago no ura yu
Uchi-idete mireba

Mashiro ni zo

Emerging from behind
The barrier shadow cast by
Tago's shore,
I am startled by

<i>Fuji no taka-ne ni</i>	<i>The lofty cone of Fuji</i>
<i>Yuki wa furikeri.</i>	<i>Whitely dazzling with its newly fallen snow.</i>

A more sophisticated poet such as Hitomaro (c. 700) uses natural images to form a conceit describing other natural images.

<i>Sora no umi ni</i>	<i>In the ocean of the sky</i>
<i>Kumo no nami tatsu</i>	<i>Course the undulating clouds</i>
<i>Tsuki no bune</i>	<i>Which bear the moon-boat onward</i>
<i>Hoshi no hayashi ni</i>	<i>As it seems to start its rowing</i>
<i>Kogi-kakuru miyu.</i>	<i>Through the forest of the stars.</i>

In Otoma no Katami's (c. 750) poem, natural imagery is used as a metaphor of the speaker's emotion.

<i>Kasuga no ni</i>	<i>The moor of Kasuga</i>
<i>Asa iru kumo no</i>	<i>Lies desolate beneath the morning clouds</i>
<i>Shiku-shiku ni</i>	<i>Which pile and form and spread</i>
<i>Ware wa koimasu</i>	<i>As my unanswered love increases</i>
<i>Tsuki ni hi ni ke ni.</i>	<i>In the lapse of suns and changing moons.</i>

This translation suggests that the image of the clouds is used as a simile, but in the Japanese the third line, "spreadingly, spreadingly", describes both the foregoing clouds and the following line about the speaker's love. What we have is a kind of equation between nature and man, an equation made by a verbal device such as the one in the lines, "And sent it to Sir Patrick Spence/Was walking on the sand".

Ki no Tomonori (d. c. 900) is one of the subtlest "Imagists" of waka. The two images in the following poem show nature seemingly out of harmony with herself.

<i>Hisakata no</i>	<i>On this day in spring</i>
<i>Hikari nodokeki</i>	<i>When the lambent air suffuses</i>
<i>Haru no hi ni</i>	<i>Soft tranquillity,</i>
<i>Shizu-gokoro naku</i>	<i>Why should cherry petals flutter</i>
<i>Hana no chiruran.</i>	<i>With unsettled heart to earth?</i>

A lesser poet who wished to make only the point that it is a pity to see cherry blossoms fall on such a lovely day would not have constructed the poem as it is—only the fourth line (of the Japanese) “without calm heart”, is out of place in this scene and does not begin with the initial “h” sound of the other lines. The important thing about the poem is that it deals with the relation of the speaker of the poem to *the rest of nature*. What is apparently out of place in the natural order is really out of place in man. Appearance and reality; man out of step with nature which includes him: only the human observer thinks that the cherry petals fall “with unsettled heart”. Actually, the falling flowers are part of a lovely day, and of the ever-changing, ever-constant cycle of the seasons.

A second technique employed by waka to emancipate itself from its narrow limits is allegory, if by “allegory” one may loosely mean a poetic statement which expresses a second meaning growing out of the first. One typical use of the allegorical mode is found in love poetry; certainly many of the poems which Genji and the Emperor repeated to each other must have been written with this technique. There are so many such waka that a somewhat conventional one from the *Kokinshū* (*Anthology of Ancient and Modern Poems*, 905 A.D.) will illustrate this mode.

<i>Yamabuki wa</i>	<i>You yellow roses,</i>
<i>Aya na na saki so</i>	<i>You must not flower so recklessly,</i>
<i>Hana min to</i>	<i>Since he who planted you</i>
<i>Ueken kimi ga</i>	<i>With promises of tender care</i>
<i>Koyoi konaku ni.</i>	<i>Will not be here to treasure you tonight.</i>

Like Ezra Pound's “Jewel Stairs' Grievance”, this poem is a woman's complaint of desertion. There is no reason to doubt the overt statement of the poem that the lover planted roses, but this does not prevent the reader from seeing that the woman identifies herself with the flowers. The broken promises were made to her rather than to them. Part of the beauty of this otherwise conventional complaint lies in its utter femininity: “You should not flower so vainly or so recklessly”, she says, thinking all the while, “He is not coming tonight, and after all the trouble I went to making myself beautiful for him”.

Allegory may also be employed in poems with religious overtones. This kind of Buddhist speculation resembles somewhat, *mutatis mutandis*, the poetry of the English "metaphysical" poets. Another poem by Oshikōchi no Mitsune will serve as an example.

<i>Yuki furite</i>	<i>All traces seem to be obscured</i>
<i>Hito mo kayowanu</i>	<i>of the outlines of this road on</i>
<i>Michi nare ya</i>	<i>which the snow falls and no men pass.</i>
<i>Ato-baka mo naku</i>	
<i>Omoi-kiyuran.</i>	

This is the overt meaning of the poem. The last two lines reveal, however, that the poem is not merely descriptive. For example, *ato-baka mo naku*, "without a trace", may be separated to give us *baka mo naku*, an emphatic for *hakanaku*, "without stability", i.e., the "transitory" or "fleeting" world of appearance in Buddhist doctrine. The allegory must be included in an English translation.

*How like this road my life,
Covered over with the obscuring snow,
Where not a person passes,
Where not a trace remains to mark the course
Where I have travelled through this transitory world.*

The poem which Tsurayuki (883-946) composed as his "death verse" in review of his life offers a final example of the allegorical mode.

<i>Te ni musubu</i>	<i>Wrapping in my fingers</i>
<i>Mizu ni yadoreru</i>	<i>The reflected image of the moon</i>
<i>Tsuki kage no</i>	<i>Lodging in the water,</i>
<i>Aru ka naki ka no</i>	<i>I ask, Is it, was it there,</i>
<i>Yo ni koso arikere.</i>	<i>This lodging in the shadowed world?</i>

The striking conceit of life compared to a man wrapping his hand about the reflection of the moon in the water and finding the effort to be futile illustrates, perhaps, the "metaphysical" quality of this mode of waka.

Besides imagery and allegory, waka has at its disposal a third, more unusual technique, which can scarcely be named anything other than verbal dexterity. To call the many devices which obtain two or three meanings out of a single line mere puns or word-plays, relegates such poetry to that acrostic land to which Dryden dismissed Shadwell. The double meaning of *ato haka mo naku* in Mitsune's "How like this road my life" shows how the technique enables a poet to say two things at once, not for the sake of the shock that one series of sounds can have two meanings, but because the method is both economical and a way of discovering truth. And certainly no one would deny that waka must express truth economically, or not at all. This technique is all the more available to Japanese poets because of their writing conventions. In writing waka with a brush, the poet does not separate the phonetic characters (waka traditionally does not use Chinese characters) into their proper word-clusters, but rather writes them equidistant from each other so that the reader is left to apprehend the syllables in meaningful groups of words.

Although this verbal dexterity is one of the standard techniques of waka, there has been no one more highly skilled at it than that very remarkable woman, Ono no Komachi (834-880). Her beauty, her intelligence, her consuming passions, and her tragic later years are treated in many a poem, legend, and play, and are also implicit in her poetry. Her two great themes are transience or mutability, and the difficulty of distinguishing between appearance and reality. Her way of conveying her passionate concern for these themes is frequently to put the language under a stress to say so much in so few syllables that the reader is left breathless at the intensity. This intensity is evident in one of her typical poems.

*Iro miede
Utsurou mono wa
Yo no naka no
Hito no kokoro no
Hana ni zo arikeru.*

*A thing which fades without its color
visible is the flower of the heart of
a man of the middle of this world.*

The prose translation shows very dimly one aspect of the structure of the poem, the "of" clauses, but in reverse. The *no*'s in the

Japanese are the post-positive particles indicating the possessive case. The poem points ever more narrowly and exactly to the changeful culprit—world, middle, man, heart, “flower”—and having found it, exclaims *ni zo*, “in it!” The real complexity of the poem arises, however, from the weight which Komachi has put upon the first word. *Iro* means “color”. It also means “coloring” in the sense of “passion”, and by extension, a love-affair, or a lover. The third area of meaning the word may have is that of “complexion” or “face”, that is, the lover’s face as opposed to the true state of his heart. The fourth area of meaning is religious, “outward form”, rather than inward truth. Only Komachi would try to write a poem where all these meanings could be simultaneously expressed. Mankind, and especially her lovers, try to look as though they had one motivation, fidelity, but really they are false; this offers a lesson on the truth of Buddhism.

*Find mutability
In that which changes without fading
In outward aspect, especially
In the color, looks, and the deceptive flower
Of the heart of what this world calls man!*

The complaint in this next poem seems to have been addressed to a specific man who could not answer to Komachi’s passion.

<i>Ima wa tote</i>	<i>As I say, “Now; now</i>
<i>Waga mi shigure ni</i>	<i>He’ll come,” even now, because my</i>
	<i>beauty</i>
<i>Furimureba</i>	<i>Is drenched through with</i>
<i>Koto no ha sae ni</i>	<i>This drizzle, age, the very promises</i>
	<i>you made me</i>
<i>Utsuroinikeri.</i>	<i>Fade like the leaves left to the rain.</i>

It may be instructive to explain why this translation, limited as it is, takes thirty-three words to convey any sense at all from Komachi’s ten words (and four particles). *Ima wa tote* means both “even now” and “Saying, ‘now’”. What is to happen “now” must be understood from the rest of the poem. *Shigure*, one of some twenty Japanese words for rain, refers specifically to the

cold, drizzling rain of autumn, and bears traditional associations of great sadness. *Furinureba* must be taken as one word meaning "Because (my body) has grown old", and as two words, meaning "fallen on and soaked (by rain)". The *ba* in *koto no ba* means the leaves exposed to the rain, but the expression as a whole means "words", that is, vows or promises. It is not a question of which meaning is implied; rather, this verbal dexterity is used to express a truth arising out of the unexpected relatedness of the various meanings.

One more example of Komachi's verbal intensity will show how she can start from emotional calm and go to frenzied passion in five lines.

<i>Hito ni awan</i>	<i>On a moonless night when we cannot</i>
<i>Tsuki no naki ni wa</i>	<i>meet (because you cannot see the way,</i>
<i>Omobi-okite</i>	<i>I sleep, but) I awake longing for you</i>
<i>Mune hashiribi ni</i>	<i>with my heart heaving excitedly within my</i>
<i>Kokoro ya ke ori.</i>	<i>breast for a long time.</i>

Even the overt prose statement carries a good deal of the excitement of the poem, but the real force comes from the remarkably sustained imagery. The word clusters must also be defined as *omo-bi*, *hashiri-bi*, and *kokoro yake*, to mean:

*On such a night as this, when
The lack of moonlight shades your way to me,
I wake from sleep, my passion blazing,
My breast a fire raging, exploding flame,
While within me my heart chars.*

There is a fourth technique of *waka* which is difficult to describe adequately. Perhaps "generalization" will do, if the word may mean that effort to universalize individual experience exemplified by Virgil and Dryden. Along with the generalization goes a purity and "strength" of language which refines common diction to make universal experience of it. The master of this art is, like Komachi, one of the great poets represented in the *Kokinshū*, Ariwara no Narihira (825-880). Also like Komachi, his work is impossible to translate, but for almost opposite reasons

—the *control* of passion, relative *simplicity* of language, and emphasis of universal rather than individual experience.

Narihira's handsome bearing, his intelligence and high rank made many women desire him. One such woman evidently sent him a complaint saying, Come to see me while my cherry blossoms are still in bloom. He replied,

<i>Kyō kozu wa</i>	<i>If I do not come today,</i>
<i>Asu wa yuki to zo</i>	<i>Tomorrow the flowers will fall</i>
	<i>like snow;</i>
<i>Furinamashi</i>	<i>If I go then will you vow that</i>
<i>Kiezu wa aritomo</i>	<i>Though such fallen beauties last</i>
	<i>unmelted</i>
<i>Hana to mimashi ya.</i>	<i>They still will look like flowers</i>
	<i>to me?</i>

Her accusation of unfaithfulness is given the lie by his claim that she will inevitably have betrayed him already anyway, since all things are subject to change, however much they may appear to remain the same. Even in this unpretentious poem such an individual incident is universalized by the imagery, and the universal principle is given application to her individual case. It may be helpful to add that the apparent confusion of imagery—the melting flowers—is to be explained by the fact that the flowers are cherry blossoms, whose pale bloom may be mistaken for the snow on the branches and the ground. The “confusion” is deliberate and traditional, and furthers Narihira's theme.

It is said that the next poem was composed when Narihira's lady rebuffed him. He went alone to view plum blossoms by moonlight as he had done the year before with her, only to find everything different. This is an unpromising origin for:

<i>Tsuki ya aranu</i>	<i>Is there no moon?</i>
<i>Haru ya mukashi no</i>	<i>Can it be this spring is not the same</i>
<i>Haru naranu</i>	<i>As that remembered spring,</i>
<i>Waga mi hitotsu wa</i>	<i>While this alone, my mortal body,</i>
<i>Moto no mi ni shite.</i>	<i>Remains as ever, without change?</i>

This poem is, to be sure, an expression of surprise that the mistress

should be unfaithful while he remains constant. But its real excitement arises from the speaker's sense that suddenly the universal laws of changing nature are abrogated and that he, a mortal, is the only constant thing in the universe. Of course, this is meant to be only a momentary hallucination which shows how great a shock he has undergone, and is finally a reaffirmation of the universal laws after a moment's confusion.

Narihira's death poem is redeemed from sentimentality by its simplicity, by the haunting beauty of its diction, by the balance of the syntax, and by the lack of self-pity before a universal law.

<i>Tsui ni yuku</i>	<i>Though formerly I heard</i>
<i>Michi to wa kanete</i>	<i>About this road that all must travel</i>
<i>Kikishikado</i>	<i>At the inevitable end,</i>
<i>Kinō kyō to wa</i>	<i>In my yesterdays I never thought</i>
<i>Omowazarishi wo.</i>	<i>Today I must depart.</i>

Waka employs other techniques than these four, of course, but the use of these "in the Japanese manner" distinguishes the form from other Japanese forms and from western poetry. There are in addition, however, certain other ways in which waka manages to achieve more meaning than might be expected from five lines. One of the most important ways is negative, because waka achieves a certain freedom by attempting to deal with only certain kinds of poetic expression. It has no dramatic or narrative aims, it eschews satire and humor, and is almost always personal. Waka are "personal" in the sense that the "speaker" of the poem and the poet are always very much alike. This would suggest that all waka-poets are Romantics, but consideration of Narihira forestalls this conclusion. Because however personal waka are in the sense described, they are "public" or "occasional" in a way which English poetry has perhaps never been. (This occasional quality has left waka to a large degree in the last hundred years or so, but in reading the earlier poetry the well-advised reader is alert to the occasion which the poet assumes.)

The term "occasion" is used loosely in the sense that a waka usually originates in an event which actually happened, and however personal such an event, it is fitted into a situation which is traditional and conventional. Such quite different situations as

something which has happened on New Year's Day, a visit to a famous or beautiful place, or a broken tryst conventionally call for brush and paper. Waka achieves freedom, then, by its very limitation to certain forms of expression and to a certain number of conventions. By operating within these limits, a poet may assume a multitude of attitudes and associations which a western poet would despair of achieving without creating his own context inside the poem. Sometimes only a phrase (e.g. "the first wild goose", "the middle of this world", etc.) will relate a poem to a dozen or a hundred other poems. At its worst, this traditionalism leads to conventionality and formal rigidity. At its best, it enables the poet to assume much so that he can express more, to be very personal because his method is traditional and "public".

Of course, the degree to which waka are occasional varies. For analytical purposes, the poems may be divided into the following conventional modes which are occasional in decreasing degree: the strictly occasional, the declarative, the descriptive, the reflective, and the philosophical. Each of these modes is more occasional than its western counterparts, because in a sense, every poetically minded Japanese functions as a poet laureate.

Very old waka often give the impression that they are wholly occasional in nature. A poem ascribed to the Imperial Consort of the Emperor Tenchi (c. 670) addresses the Emperor when he was seriously ill:

*Ama no hara
Furisake mireba*

*Ō-kimi no
Mi-inochi wa nagaku
Ama tarashitari.*

*When I cast my gaze about
Admiring the heaven's endless plains,*

*Then I trust, my Lord,
That the radiance of your lifetime
Will outlast the spangled sky.*

A typical occasional poem, which is not however as obviously attached to an occasion, is this anonymous poem from the *Shinkokinshū* (*A New Anthology of Ancient and Modern Poems*, 1205 A.D.).

*Iso no kami
Furuki miyako wo*

*When I come and gaze
Upon the ancient capital that seems*

*Kite mireba
Mukashi kazashishi
Hana sakinikeri.*

*As old as its adjacent hills,
I see the flowers bloom untended
That made the garlands for an
ancient age.*

The poet has written a poem upon the occasion of his visit to Nara, the ancient capital. Both the pilgrimage and the poem celebrating it are socially recognized acts. But more than this, the poet's own emotions have been absorbed into the historical and religious context, and the poem is a public expression of feeling.

Waka are frequently used as "declarative" poetry, as a kind of poetic discourse, and most typically for messages of love, whether it is Yakamochi (d. 785) asking for a feminine hand under his head, or Komachi playing upon various degrees of reality to complain of her lover's faithlessness.

*Awa-yuki no
Niwa ni furi-shiki
Samuki yo wa
Ta-makura makazu
Hitori ka mo nen.*

*With the foamy snow
Falling on the garden, spreading
Its cold blanket on the night,
Must I, without a hand spread
For my pillow, sleep alone tonight?*

*Utsutsu ni wa
Samo koso arame
Yume ni sae
Hito-me wo moru to
Miru ga wabishisa.*

*In waking daylight
It is understandable enough,
But when in even my dreams
I see you fearing people's eyes
And fleeing me, this is misery itself.*

Another mode of waka is descriptive poetry. It is strange to assign an occasional quality to poetic description, but in as small a country as Japan the typical beauty of each locality is well known. There are few poems which describe experiences which are not available to the imagination of any person who looks at, say, the clouds forming over the Pacific, or who visits Akashi Bay, as in the following poems by Hitomaro and by an anonymous poet of the *Kokinshū*.

*Ō-umi ni
Shima no aranaku ni*

*With no solid islands
In the Great Sea's wide expanse,*

*Una-bara no
Tayutau nami ni
Tateru shira-kumo.*

*The busy clouds must seek
To build white towers on the tossing,
Fluctuating, wavy plains.*

*Hono-bono to
Akashi no ura no
Asa-giri ni
Shima kakure yuku
Fune wo shi zo omou.*

*Palely, palely
In the early mists dawn comes
Over Akashi Bay,
While my longings follow, follow
In the ship half-hidden by the
misty isle.*

Two very famous poems may serve as examples of reflective waka, of what might be called the personal mode. The first is by Abe no Nakamaro (d. 780) who wrote a poem expressing the deepest loneliness and longing for Japan while he spent his time on a diplomatic mission to China. The second is Komachi's most famous poem which celebrates her loss of youth, "celebrates" because a poem on one's loss of youth, activity, or beauty is conventional. (The various meanings of *iro* ought to be recalled for her poem—color, face, passion, and outward form.)

*Ama no bara
Furi-sake mireba
Kasuga naru
Mikasa no yama ni
Ideshi tsuki ka mo.*

*Over the endless plains
Of heaven and back, I gaze,
And ponder, Is it not this
That rises over Mt. Mikasa, shining on
The Shrine of Kasuga, is not this my
native moon?*

*Hana no iro wa
Utsurinikeri na
Itazura ni
Waga mi yo ni furu
Nagame seshi ma ni.*

*The color of these flowers
No longer will allure; they have faded
While I ponder unavailingly
The desire that my blooming once
could rouse—
But time's long rain destroys all flowers
and brings night.*

The last mode of waka is the philosophical (or the religious). The following poem from the *Gosenshū* (*Anthology of Later Selections*, c. 950) very likely had its origin in an amour; the

poet is unknown, however, and one cannot be sure. In any case, he has defined with great skill the emotions of an aging person in the dual terms of spring and autumn. The poem is occasional in the sense that it employs personal emotions in traditional terms for public expression.

*Haru no hi no
Nagaki omoi wa
Wasureji wo
Hito no kokoro ni
Aki ya tatsuran.*

*The long-revolved desires
Of the days of springtime
Can never be forgot,
Especially when the chill of autumn
Starts to grip the hearts of men.*

The next poem is by Narihira.

*Kaki-kurasu
Kokoro no yami ni
Madoiniki
Yume utsutsu to wa
Yo-bito sadame yo.*

*In the blackest shadow
Of the darkness of the soul I wander
Lost; you people
Of this twilight world, explain:
Is my love reality, or is it dream?*

This is only a lame attempt to translate the movement of the poem, and there is no way to express in English what *kokoro no yami* means without destroying the imagery. What is translated "darkness of the soul" is a Buddhist term for erotic love. And *yume utsutsu* means "dream, reality", with the terms placed together to show the poet's bewilderment. A love affair gives rise here to mixed emotions and a pained conscience, which Narihira has generalized into philosophical terms. At the same time, he turns to the people about him, asking them to resolve his bewilderment. This public appeal is all the more subtle for Narihira's address, *yo-bito*, which means either "world-people" or "night-people". In short, while asking for advice he points out that the people who give it are as much in the psychological and moral dark as he is. When such a relation exists between the poet and his audience, we have not a milieu of a few specialized poets and a large number of readers, but rather a society in which anyone may step forward, declaim in poetry, and retire. It is this more than anything else which enables one to find an occasional quality even in poetry as highly generalized as that of Narihira.

While waka may not really be thrust into these categories, such schematic analysis as this does perhaps provide an introduction to waka's techniques and to its underlying attitudes and assumptions. A reader who is interested in proceeding from this brief discussion to further study of waka would do well to learn something of the peculiar genius of the language from Arthur Waley's excellent little book, *Japanese Poetry: The Uta*. Perhaps such a reader will verify what has been suggested here—that waka combines concision with verbal and imagistic richness, tradition with freshness, the occasional with the personal, and the familiar and obvious with the subtly implied. And since waka-poets do not need to offer a private response to a strange modern world, both our dwindling species of poetry-readers and our embattled poets may turn with relief and even envy to a form of poetry which has paradoxically maintained freshness and popularity through tradition and subtlety.

JOSEPH WARREN BEACH

Photograph Found In An Old Trunk

"Look here, upon this picture, and on this."

I

What crown of pride, my boy! . . . were it a girl's . . .
Lustre of morning in tossed clinging curls,
And hothouse pallor of unweathered skin
Smooth as rose petals round the unsmiling eyes,
Thin lips, and delicate determined chin!

His high starched collar holds the boy's chin up,
Supports a neck that is a brittle stem
Ready to snap and let its primrose cups
Trail in the dust. A child's face is a flower
Too frail in a stiff wind to stand an hour.

What in this speaking boy's face gives the clue
To strengths that may defend him against fears
Blanching the blood whichever way he turns,
And bring him to the end of sixty years
Exulting in the fire in which he burns?

There! in that firm and just-not-quivering chin
And lips that will not part for any smile
Of frivolous appeasement, eyes where fright
Fades out like shadows in the clear dawn-light
Defining summits that he sights within!

His fears are of the nerves. The world he sights
About him on the earth and in the skies,
In men and in the universe of thought,
He fixes with intent and steady eyes
As one resolved to be deceived in nought.

It is the eyes that see, it's the weak chin
Made strong in compensation of defect—
Motor of stalling heart and intellect—
Has powered him to be what he might be
Regardless of all that he might not have been.

O look upon this picture, and on this
Image of seamed and patched and leathery age,
And tell me if by any stretch of sense
Identity of blood-stream can make one
Such innocence and such experience!

The fact is there in records unimpugned,
And though we know not what the boy might say,
The man is sure they two are certified
The same by the obligation they both owned
To pay back with full interest the sum loaned
At birth and each to make the world his bride.

II

Straight in the camera's eye he stares, but shows
No consciousness of eyes or men behind them,
Women, or men, that he should heed or mind them,
Ingratiate with smiles, elude or blind them
With camouflage thrown over what he knows,

Nor consciousness of his own self-containment
So absolute he is all unaware
Of what the rigid carriage of his head
And muscle-tensions round his mouth lay bare
Sure as Cain's twisted lips betrayed what Cain meant . . .

But here's no beastly humping of the back,
Flexing of paws and crouching for the spring,
No enemy in sight nor hateful thing
To be torn asunder and cleared from his track,
And here is no wing's frantic fluttering.

The man knows what the boy's gaze exploring
Within himself besieges steadily
Striving to penetrate and clarify
And summoning strength in weakness to support
The drag, the burden of the mystery.

Of all this unintelligible world
It is the weight, it is the density,
The viscous medium, the slowing down
Of movement forward toward conceived delight
Or meanings clothed in shapeliness and light

That slopes his skinny shoulders, bows his neck,
Gives to his mouth and chin pathetic air
Of childish firmness and belligerency,
Leaving those eyes sunk under marble brows
Deep in a cavern dusk of things not there,

Eyes that from tiresome prospects turn aside
Or force them to the semblance of his dream
Remodeled and composed to make them right
With such apportionment of dark and light
As will give sense and seemliness to seem.

A force here to be reckoned with for sure
In the still concentration of its being,
To itself unknown, whether force to endure,
To seek and find, to evade and ignore,
Or to have sight of what lies beyond seeing.

Oh, none of this to the boy's thought is known—
If it *is* thought wherein his being dwells
Like a winged insect curled in its cocoon.
He is the innocent bearer of a force
That raises mountains up, cracks open shells,

Draws up from seeds those pale and quivering rods
Recurved that force a passage through the loam.

This boy's neck is a bean sprout lifting clods
Or Atlas bent beneath the whole sky's weight,
Till broken loose and shooting sunward straight.

How he would marvel that so frail a shoot
Might toughen into beanstalk and bear flowers
And seed-pods to insure through countless years
Fragrance and nourishment upon the earth. . . .
Or better than beanstalk, thicken to the girth

Of some great tree to drain and cumber ground
Through generations. What obscure dismay
Could he foresee what unmeant cruelties
This unsuspected power that in him lies
Might perpetrate some unimagined day,

Or how with secular pressure underground
Straining earth's crust with dull ominous sound
Of destined change, he'd topple mouldered walls
And open up horizons to derange
Spirits untempered to the vast and strange!

Poor lamb! he slumps there in the witness box
Not dreaming he is called to testify,
Nor in what cause nor where the guilt may lie,
Nor more than dimly conscious of himself
Or what keys he may hold to fit what locks,

Yet in some dim instinctual way aware,
Though life makes claims upon him hard to meet,
The world lies thick about him to explore
With branching corridors and many a door
Ready to swing out upon light and air,

And some compulsion on him that he feels
To find the right doors, turning the right keys,
Discovering the ideal, unique occasion
It is his destiny and his vocation
Infallibly to recognize and seize

If in the labyrinth and web of powers
He is to take the place his power assigns him,
Make his own music through such days and hours
As are the limits to which time confines him . . .
One with the figured essence that defines him.

Common American Tree-Toad

It makes me homesick in advance
To think what I shall miss
When I have moved to other climes
All unlike to this.

But not to tell of George or Jim,
Alburey or Red,
I'll name the least of joys that here
Make my daily bread.

A creature I have never seen
When summer days are long
That fills the hush of the dark hours
With crepitating song,

Telling his beads in some elm-crotch
Prayer-centred and alone,
Oblivious of the green and red
Lights and the motors' drone,

He makes me dream my head is laid
Between dusk rows of corn
Where the moon over secret woods
Tips her silver horn.

His measured chime without a change
Is like eternity—
Featureless blank of time—and yet
Bearing no threat to me,

But rather like a kitchen clock,
It comfortably tells
Of time, our time, that's measured out
In sun-marked intervals.

It weaves the web of sense wherein
Our lives are tightly wound
But nothing of the vault, the shroud,
Is figured in its sound.

And this the least of all the sounds
My stoppered ears will miss
When I have moved to other climes
All unlike to this.

NICK JOAQUIN

The Summer Solstice

THE MORETAS WERE SPENDING St. John's Day with the children's grandfather whose feast-day it was. Doña Lupeng awoke feeling faint with the heat, a sound of screaming in her ears. In the dining room the three boys, already attired in their holiday suits, were at breakfast, and came crowding around her, talking all at once.

"How long you have slept, Mama!"

"We thought you were never getting up!"

"Do we leave at once, huh?"

"Are we going now?"

"Hush, hush, I implore you! Now look: your father has a headache, and so have I. So be quiet this instant—or no one goes to Grandfather's."

Though it was only seven by the clock the house was already a furnace, the windows dilating with the harsh light and the air already burning with the immense, intense fever of noon.

She found the children's nurse working in the kitchen. "And why is it you who are preparing breakfast? Where is Amada?" But without waiting for an answer she went to the back door and opened it, and the screaming in her ears became a wild screaming in the stables across the yard. "Oh, my God!" She groaned and, grasping her skirts, hurried across the yard.

In the stables Entoy, the driver, apparently deaf to the screams, was hitching the pair of piebald ponies to the coach.

"Not the closed coach, Entoy! The open carriage!" shouted Doña Lupeng as she came up.

"But the dust, señora—"

"I know, but better to be dirty than to be boiled alive. And what ails your wife, eh? Have you been beating her again?"

"Oh no, señora: I have not touched her."

"Then why is she screaming? Is she ill?"

"I do not think so. But how do I know? You can go and see for yourself, señora. She is up there."

When Doña Lupeng entered the room, the big half-naked

woman sprawled across the bamboo bed stopped screaming. Doña Lupeng was shocked.

"What is this, Amada? Why are you still in bed at this hour? And in such a posture! Come, get up at once. You should be ashamed!"

But the woman on the bed merely stared. Her sweat-beaded brows contracted, as if in an effort to understand. Then her face relaxed, her mouth sagged open humorously and, rolling over on her back and spreading out her big soft arms and legs, she began noiselessly quaking with laughter—the mute mirth jerking in her throat; the moist pile of her flesh quivering like brown jelly. Saliva dribbled from the corners of her mouth.

Doña Lupeng blushed, looking around helplessly; and seeing that Entoy had followed and was leaning in the doorway, watching stolidly, she blushed again. The room reeked hotly of intimate odors. She averted her eyes from the laughing woman on the bed, in whose nakedness she seemed so to participate that she was ashamed to look directly at the man in the doorway.

"Tell me, Entoy; has she been to the Tadtarin?"

"Yes, señora. Last night."

"But I forbade her to go! And I forbade you to let her go!"

"I could do nothing."

"Why, you beat her at the least pretext!"

"But now I dare not touch her."

"Oh, and why not?"

"It is the day of St. John: the spirit is in her."

"But, man—"

"It is true, señora. The spirit is in her. She is the Tadtarin. She must do as she pleases. Otherwise, the grain would not grow, the trees would bear no fruit, the rivers would give no fish, and the animals would die."

"Naku, I did not know your wife was so powerful, Entoy."

"At such times she is not my wife: she is the wife of the river, she is the wife of the crocodile, she is the wife of the moon."

"But how can they still believe such things?" demanded Doña Lupeng of her husband as they drove in the open carriage through the pastoral country-side that was the arrabal of Paco in the eighteen-fifties.

Don Paeng, drowsily stroking his mustaches, his eyes closed against the hot light, merely shrugged.

"And you should have seen that Entoy," continued his wife. "You know how the brute treats her: she cannot say a word but he thrashes her. But this morning he stood as meek as a lamb while she screamed and screamed. He seemed actually in awe of her, do you know—actually afraid of her!"

Don Paeng darted a sidelong glance at his wife, by which he intimated that the subject was not a proper one for the children, who were sitting opposite, facing their parents.

"Oh, look, boys—here comes the St. John!" cried Doña Lupeng, and she sprang up in the swaying carriage, propping one hand on her husband's shoulder while with the other she held up her silk parasol.

And "Here come the men with their St. John!" cried voices up and down the country-side. People in wet clothes dripping with well water, ditch-water and river-water came running across the hot woods and fields and meadows, brandishing cans of water, wetting each other uproariously, and shouting "San Juan! San Juan!" as they ran to meet the procession.

Up the road, stirring a cloud of dust, and gaily bedrenched by the crowds gathered along the wayside, a concourse of young men clad only in soggy trousers were carrying aloft an image of the Precursor. Their teeth flashed white in their laughing faces and their hot bodies glowed crimson as they pranced past, shrouded in fiery dust, singing and shouting and waving their arms: the St. John riding swiftly above the sea of dark heads and glittering in the noon sun—a fine, blonde, heroic St. John: very male, very arrogant: the Lord of Summer indeed: the Lord of Light and Heat—erect and goldly virile above the prone and female earth—while his worshippers danced and the dust thickened and the animals reared and roared and the merciless fires came raining down from the skies—the vast outpouring of light that marks this climax of the solar year—raining relentlessly upon field and river and town and winding road, and upon the joyous throng of young men against whose uproar a couple of seminarians in muddy cassocks vainly intoned the hymn of the noon god:

*"That we, thy servants, in chorus
May praise thee, our tongues restore us . . ."*

But Doña Lupeng, standing in the stopped carriage, looking very young and elegant in her white frock, under the twirling parasol, stared down on the passing male horde with increasing annoyance. The insolent man-smell of their bodies rose all about her—wave upon wave of it—enveloping her, assaulting her senses, till she felt faint with it and pressed a handkerchief to her nose. And as she glanced at her husband and saw with what a smug smile he was watching the revellers, her annoyance deepened. When he bade her sit down because all eyes were turned on her, she pretended not to hear; stood up even straighter, as if to defy those rude creatures flaunting their manhood in the sun.

And she wondered peevishly what the braggarts were being so cocky about? For this arrogance, this pride, this bluff male health of theirs was (she told herself) founded on the impregnable virtue of generations of good women. The boobies were so sure of themselves because they had always been sure of their wives. "All the sisters being virtuous, all the brothers are brave," thought Doña Lupeng, with a bitterness that rather surprised her. Women had built it up: this poise of the male. Ah, and women could destroy it, too! She recalled, vindictively, this morning's scene at the stables: Amada naked and screaming in bed while from the doorway her lord and master looked on in meek silence. And was it not the mystery of a woman in her flowers that had restored the tongue of that old Hebrew prophet?

"Look, Lupeng, they have all passed now," Don Paeng was saying. "Do you mean to stand all the way?"

She looked around in surprise and hastily sat down. The children tittered, and the carriage started.

"Has the heat gone to your head, woman?" asked Don Paeng, smiling.

The children burst frankly into laughter.

Their mother colored and hung her head. She was beginning to feel ashamed of the thoughts that had filled her mind. They seemed improper—almost obscene—and the discovery of such depths of wickedness in herself appalled her. She moved closer to her husband, to share the parasol with him.

"And did you see our young cousin Guido?" he asked.

"Oh, was he in that crowd?"

"A European education does not seem to have spoiled his taste for country pleasures."

"I did not see him."

"He waved and waved."

"The poor boy. He will feel hurt. But truly, Paeng, I did not see him."

"Well, that is always a woman's privilege."

But when that afternoon, at the grandfather's, the young Guido presented himself, properly attired and brushed and scented, Doña Lupeng was so charming and gracious with him that he was enchanted and gazed after her all afternoon with enamoured eyes.

This was the time when our young men were all going to Europe and bringing back with them, not the Age of Victoria, but the Age of Byron. The young Guido knew nothing of Darwin and evolution; he knew everything about Napoleon and the Revolution. When Doña Lupeng expressed surprise at his presence that morning in the St. John's crowd, he laughed in her face.

"But I adore these old fiestas of ours! They are so romantic! Last night, do you know, we walked all the way through the woods, I and some boys, to see the procession of the Tadtarin."

"And was that romantic too?" asked Doña Lupeng.

"It was weird. It made my flesh crawl. All those women in such a mystic frenzy! And she who was the Tadtarin last night—she was a figure right out of a flamenco!"

"I fear to disenchant you, Guido—but that woman happens to be our cook."

"She is beautiful."

"Our Amada beautiful? But she is old and fat!"

"She is beautiful—as that old tree you are leaning on is beautiful," calmly insisted the young man, mocking her with his eyes.

They were out in the buzzing orchard, among the ripe mangoes; Doña Lupeng seated on the grass, her legs tucked beneath her, and the young man sprawled flat on his belly, gazing up at her, his face moist with sweat. The children were chasing dragonflies. The sun stood still in the west. The long day refused to end. From the house came the sudden roaring laughter of the men playing cards.

"Beautiful! Romantic! Adorable! Are those the only words you learned in Europe?" cried Doña Lupeng, feeling very an-

noyed with this young man whose eyes adored her one moment and mocked her the next.

"Ah, I also learned to open my eyes over there—to see the holiness and the mystery of what is vulgar."

"And what is so holy and mysterious about—about the Tadarin, for instance?"

"I do not know. I can only feel it. And it frightens me. Those rituals come to us from the earliest dawn of the world. And the dominant figure is not the male but the female."

"But they are in honor of St. John."

"What has your St. John to do with them? Those women worship a more ancient lord. Why, do you know that no man may join in those rites unless he first puts on some article of women's apparel and—"

"And what did you put on, Guido?"

"How sharp you are! Oh, I made such love to a toothless old hag there that she pulled off her stocking for me. And I pulled it on, over my arm, like a glove. How your husband would have despised me!"

"But what on earth does it mean?"

"I think it is to remind us men that once upon a time you women were supreme and we men were the slaves."

"But surely there have always been kings?"

"Oh, no. The queen came before the king, and the priestess before the priest, and the moon before the sun."

"The moon?"

"—who is the lord of the women."

"Why?"

"Because the tides of women, like the tides of the sea, are the tides of the moon. Because the first blood—But what is the matter, Lupe? Oh, have I offended you?"

"Is this how they talk to decent women in Europe?"

"They do not talk to women, they pray to them—as men did in the dawn of the world."

"Oh, you are mad! mad!"

"Why are you so afraid, Lupe?"

"I, afraid? And of whom? My dear boy, you still have your mother's milk in your mouth. I only wish you to remember that I am a married woman."

"I remember that you are a woman, yes. A beautiful woman. And why not? Did you turn into some dreadful monster when you married? Did you stop being a woman? Did you stop being beautiful? Then why should my eyes not tell you what you are—just because you are married?"

"Ah, this is too much now!" cried Doña Lupeng, and she rose to her feet.

"Do not go, I implore you! Have pity on me!"

"No more of your comedy, Guido! And besides—where have those children gone to? I must go after them."

As she lifted her skirts to walk away, the young man, propping up his elbows, dragged himself forward on the ground and solemnly kissed the tips of her shoes. She stared down in sudden horror, transfixed—and he felt her violent shudder. She backed away slowly, still staring; then turned and fled toward the house.

On the way home that evening Don Paeng noticed that his wife was in a mood. They were alone in the carriage: the children were staying overnight at their grandfather's. The heat had not subsided. It was heat without gradations: that knew no twilights and no dawns; that was still there, after the sun had set; that would be there already, before the sun had risen.

"Has young Guido been annoying you?" asked Don Paeng.

"Yes! All afternoon."

"These young men today—what a disgrace they are! I felt embarrassed as a man to see him following you about with those eyes of a whipped dog."

She glanced at him coldly. "And was that all you felt, Paeng? Embarrassed—as a man?"

"A good husband has constant confidence in the good sense of his wife," he pronounced grandly, and smiled at her.

But she drew away; huddled herself in the other corner. "He kissed my feet," she told him disdainfully, her eyes on his face.

He frowned and made a gesture of distaste. "Do you see? They have the instincts, the style of the canalla! To kiss a woman's feet, to follow her like a dog, to adore her like a slave . . ."

"Is it so shameful for a man to adore women?"

"A gentleman loves and respects Woman. The cads and the lunatics—they 'adore' the women."

"But maybe we do not want to be loved and respected—but to be adored."

"Ah, he has converted you then?"

"Who knows? But must we talk about it? My head is bursting with the heat."

But when they reached home she did not lie down but wandered listlessly through the empty house. When Don Paeng, having bathed and changed, came down from the bedroom, he found her in the dark parlor seated at the harp and plucking out a tune, still in her white frock and shoes.

"How can you bear those hot clothes, Lupeng? And why the darkness? Order someone to bring a light in here."

"There is no one, they have all gone to see the Tadtarin."

"A pack of loafers we are feeding!"

She had risen and gone to the window. He approached and stood behind her, grasped her elbows and, stooping, kissed the nape of her neck. But she stood still, not responding, and he released her sulkily. She turned around to face him.

"Listen, Paeng. I want to see it, too. The Tadtarin, I mean. I have not seen it since I was a little girl. And tonight is the last night."

"You must be crazy! Only low people go there. And I thought you had a headache?" He was still sulking.

"But I want to go! My head aches worse in the house. For a favor, Paeng."

"I told you: No! Go and take those clothes off. But, woman, whatever has got into you!" He strode off to the table, opened the box of cigars, took one, banged the lid shut, bit off an end of the cigar, and glared about for a light.

But she was still standing by the window and her chin was up. "Very well, if you do not want to come, do not come—but I am going."

"I warn you, Lupe; do not provoke me!"

"I will go with Amada. Entoy can take us. You cannot forbid me, Paeng. There is nothing wrong with it. I am not a child."

But standing very straight in her white frock, her eyes shining in the dark and her chin thrust up, she looked so young, so fragile, that his heart was touched. He sighed, smiled ruefully, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes, the heat has touched you in the head, Lupeng. And since you are so set on it—very well, let us go. Come, have the coach ordered!"

The cult of the Tadtarin is celebrated on three days: the feast of St. John and the two preceding days. On the first night, a young girl heads the procession; on the second, a mature woman; and on the third, a very old woman who dies and comes to life again. In these processions, as in those of Pakil and Obando, everyone dances.

Around the tiny plaza in front of the barrio chapel, quite a stream of carriages was flowing leisurely. The Moretas were constantly being hailed from the other vehicles. The plaza itself and the sidewalks were filled with chattering, strolling, profusely sweating people. More people were crowded on the balconies and windows of the houses. The moon had not yet risen; the black night smoldered; in the windless sky the lightning's abruptly branching fire seemed the nerves of the tortured air made visible.

"Here they come now!" cried the people on the balconies.

And "here come the women with their St. John!" cried the people on the sidewalks, surging forth on the street. The carriages halted and their occupants descended. The plaza rang with the shouts of people and the neighing of horses—and with another keener sound: a sound of sea waves steadily rolling nearer.

The crowd parted, and up the street came the prancing, screaming, writhing women, their eyes wild, black shawls flying around their shoulders, and their long hair streaming and covered with leaves and flowers. But the Tadtarin, a small old woman with white hair, walked with calm dignity in the midst of the female tumult, a wand in one hand, a bunch of seedlings in the other. Behind her, a group of girls bore aloft a little black image of the Baptist—a crude, primitive, grotesque image, its bug-eyed head too big for its puny naked torso, bobbing and swaying above the hysterical female horde and looking at once so comical and so pathetic that Don Paeng, watching with his wife on the sidewalk, was outraged. The image seemed to be crying for help, to be struggling to escape—a St. John indeed in the hands of the Herodiads; a doomed captive these witches were subjecting first to their derision; a gross and brutal caricature of his sex.

Don Paeng flushed hotly: he felt that all those women had personally insulted him. He turned to his wife, to take her away—but she was watching greedily, taut and breathless, her head thrust forward and her eyes bulging, the teeth bared in the slack mouth, and the sweat gleaming on her face. Don Paeng was horrified. He grasped her arm—but just then a flash of lightning blazed and the screaming women fell silent: the Tadtarin was about to die.

The old woman closed her eyes and bowed her head and sank slowly to her knees. A pallet was brought and set on the ground and she was laid in it and her face covered with a shroud. Her hands still clutched the wand and the seedlings. The women drew away, leaving her in a cleared space. They covered their heads with their black shawls and began wailing softly, unhumanly—a hushed, animal keening.

Overhead the sky was brightening; a silver light defined the rooftops. When the moon rose and flooded with hot brilliance the moveless crowded square, the black-shawled women stopped wailing and a girl approached and unshrouded the Tadtarin, who opened her eyes and sat up, her face lifted to the moonlight. She rose to her feet and extended the wand and the seedlings and the women joined in a mighty shout. They pulled off and waved their shawls and whirled and began dancing again—laughing and dancing with such joyous exciting abandon that the people in the square and on the sidewalks, and even those on the balconies, were soon laughing and dancing, too. Girls broke away from their parents and wives from their husbands to join in the orgy.

“Come, let us go now,” said Don Paeng to his wife. She was shaking with fascination; tears trembled on her lashes; but she nodded meekly and allowed herself to be led away. But suddenly she pulled free from his grasp, darted off, and ran into the crowd of dancing women.

She flung her hands to her hair and whirled and her hair came undone. Then, planting her arms akimbo, she began to trip a nimble measure, an instinctive folk-movement. She tossed her head back and her arched throat bloomed whitely. Her eyes brimmed with moonlight, and her mouth with laughter.

Don Paeng ran after her, shouting her name, but she laughed

and shook her head and darted deeper into the dense maze of the procession, which was moving again, towards the chapel. He followed her, shouting; she eluded him, laughing—and through the thick of the female horde they lost and found and lost each other again—she dancing, and he pursuing—till, carried along by the tide, they were both swallowed up into the hot, packed, turbulent darkness of the chapel. Inside poured the entire procession, and Don Paeng, finding himself trapped tight among milling female bodies, struggled with sudden panic to fight his way out. Angry voices rose all about him in the stifling darkness.

“Hoy, you are crushing my feet!”

“And let go of my shawl, my shawl!”

“Stop pushing, shameless one, or I kick you!”

“Let me pass, let me pass, you harlots!” cried Don Paeng.

“Abáh, it is a man!”

“How dare he come in here?”

“Break his head!”

“Throw the animal out!”

“Throw him out!” “Throw him out!” shrieked the voices, and Don Paeng found himself surrounded by a swarm of gleaming eyes.

Terror possessed him and he struck out savagely with both fists, with all his strength—but they closed in as savagely: solid walls of flesh that crushed upon him and pinned his arms helpless, while unseen hands struck and struck his face, and ravaged his hair and clothes, and clawed at his flesh, as—kicked and buffeted, his eyes blind and his torn mouth salty with blood—he was pushed down, down to his knees, and half-shoved, half-dragged to the doorway and rolled out to the street. He picked himself up at once and walked away with a dignity that forbade the crowd gathered outside to laugh or to pity. Entoy came running to meet him.

“But what happened to you, Don Paeng?”

“Nothing. Where is the coach?”

“Just over there, sir. But you are wounded in the face!”

“No, these are only scratches. Go and get the señora. We are going home.”

When she entered the coach and saw his bruised face and torn clothing, she smiled coolly.

"What a sight you are, man! What have you done with yourself?" And when he did not answer: "Why, have they pulled out his tongue, too?" she wondered aloud.

And when they were home and stood facing each other in the bedroom, she was still as light-hearted.

"What are you going to do, Rafael?"

"I am going to give you a whipping."

"But why?"

"Because you have behaved tonight like a lewd woman."

"How I behaved tonight is what I am. If you call that lewd, then I was always a lewd woman and a whipping will not change me—though you whipped me till I died."

"I want this madness to die in you."

"No, you want me to pay for your bruises."

He flushed darkly. "How can you say that, Lupe?"

"Because it is true. You have been whipped by the women and now you think to avenge yourself by whipping me."

His shoulders sagged and his face dulled. "If you can think that of me—"

"You could think me a lewd woman!"

"Oh, how do I know what to think of you? I was sure I knew you as I knew myself. But now you are as distant and strange to me as a female Turk in Africa!"

"Yet you would dare whip me—"

"Because I love you, because I respect you . . ."

"And because if you ceased to respect me you would cease to respect yourself?"

"Ah, I did not say that!"

"Then why not say it? It is true. And you want to say it, you want to say it!"

But he struggled against her power. "Why should I want to?" he demanded peevishly.

"Because, either you must say it—or you must whip me," she taunted.

Her eyes were upon him and the shameful fear that had unmanned him in the dark chapel possessed him again. His legs had turned to water; it was a monstrous agony to remain standing.

But she was waiting for him to speak, forcing him to speak.

"No, I cannot whip you!" he confessed miserably.

"Then say it! Say it!" she cried, pounding her clenched fists together. "Why suffer and suffer? and in the end you would only submit."

But he still struggled stubbornly. "Is it not enough that you have me helpless? Is it not enough that I feel what you want me to feel?"

But she shook her head furiously. "Until you have said it to me, there can be no peace between us."

He was exhausted at last: he sank heavily to his knees, breathing hard and streaming with sweat, his fine body curiously diminished now in its ravaged apparel.

"I adore you, Lupe," he said tonelessly.

She strained forward avidly. "What?" "What did you say?" she screamed.

And he, in his dead voice: "That I adore you. That I worship you. That the air you breathe and the ground you tread is holy to me. That I am your dog, your slave—"

But it was still not enough. Her fists were still clenched, and she cried: "Then come, crawl on the floor, and kiss my feet!"

Without a moment's hesitation, he sprawled down flat and, working his arms and legs, gaspingly clawed his way across the floor, like a great agonized lizard, the woman steadily backing away as he approached, her eyes watching him avidly, her nostrils dilating, till behind her loomed the open window, the huge glittering moon, the rapid flashes of lightning. She stopped, panting, and leaned against the sill. He lay exhausted at her feet, his face flat on the floor.

She raised her skirts and contemptuously thrust out a naked foot. He lifted his dripping face and touched his bruised lips to her toes; lifted his hands and grasped the white foot and kissed it savagely—kissed the step, the sole, the frail ankle—while she bit her lips and clutched in pain at the windowsill; her body distended and wracked by horrible shivers, her head flung back and her loose hair streaming out the window—streaming fluid and black in the white night where the huge moon glowed like a sun and the dry air flamed into lightning and the pure heat burned with the immense intense fever of noon.

JOSEPHINE MILES

The Campaign

My Packard Bell was set up in the vacant lot near the stump
Of the old peach tree. Before it, a love-seat
In tan and green told us what comfort said.
And many looked over us, or sat on the ground, why not?
There certainly were not enough ashtrays for everybody.

And from there it began.
All down the dingle through the mustard ran the voices,
All down the shale in the sunlight ran the faces,
A board fence on the left and a board fence on the right,
Because after all this was private property.

And this is what they said:
He was a child of the people and he will be a man of the people.
He read the Bible at his mother's knee
And that Bible has followed him
All the days of his life.

This is what they said:
The sovereign state of Alabama
Gives you a leader of the people for the people
All the days of his life.
Equal educational opportunity, political opportunity, economic
opportunity,
Ability, honesty, integrity, widows and orphans.

Canal Zone deems it a privilege
To second the nomination of that great
All the days of his life.
This is what they said. This is what Cooper Blane
Representing the sovereign state of New Jersey said.

Now all the apples in our apple orchard
Are ripening toward fall
And on our poles the beans are greening fast
The pods with sun alert.

And stubble in the field keeps springing yet
In fresh weed, white puffs of daisy weed,
The cat after the gophers
And the breeze brisk.

Round the ears of Packard Bell brisk the breeze
Blows the volume loud and away,
Puffs of volume pile up in the fence corners
Where the cat is active.

What do we understand?
First of all, we know the speakers are speaking the English language.
We can tell that from our love-seat, and others agree.
Second, they are both loud, lively both, and there are two of them.
Who are you for?

Now enters from the upper left, the hill slope,
A dog. After the cat.
For a while we miss the whole campaign,
But later the dog comes round for friendship.
Pats him the taxpayer and the tax receiver.

Now enters from the upper right a fisherman.
He leans to hear what's sounding on the screen
Then wordlessly he fades
Down the green sidepatch and the cliff steps
To the roaring bay, leaving no vote behind.

Ladies and gentlemen, when I spoke to you last
In Pawtucket Maine, the tide was coming in
With a long roar against the shingle of the world.
And ladies and gentlemen I say to you
Vote now against corruption, calumny,
Crime, evil, and corruption,
For the tide is coming in
With a long foreign roar against the world.
Against Winthrop Rockefeller, fair play,
Farm money, cartels, bourbon, and the fifth districts of the world.

Slowly comes up the moon over Lottie's rabbit shed,
Fencing into the sky its bars of protest,
But the vote midwest moves at another cycle
Of midnight desperate.

South Dakota five no,
Robert J. Martin of the fifth district, no.
And at the four hundred and eightieth slogan
The yes and the yes that will survive the midnight.

One sure thing is
That the tough tubes on this little old Packard Bell
Jiggling and jumping in the twi and moon light,
Hot as hornets in the excitement,
Won't set the beans on fire, and won't
Harm the cat, and won't
Even warn us where we sit and listen,
But will burn away
Lively as bugs in the midsummer
To get the last yes and no in the midsummer
On record to the moon's blanched countenance.
Who are you for?

WAYNE LAWSON

Reflexions

SCENE I

(The scene is a pastoral glade with a slight embankment designating a pool center stage. It is late afternoon. At the rise of the curtain, NARCISSUS is sitting staring into the pool, enraptured. Suddenly he notices the audience and comes forward to address them.)

NAR: Good evening. You are the spectators, I knew it instantly. I was told to expect you by the director of this tiny play, who, I suspect, is among you now, watching thin-lipped to see that I do what he has told me to do this evening. I shall do it all, sir, but I beg one moment before I begin. For I feel that you all must be told what you are going to see here once I am stilled. Allow me to introduce myself. I am called Narcissus. I'm sure you've all read about me in Bulfinch's Mythology. Over there is the pool into which I have stared for rehearsals on end. Mr. Bulfinch has something to say about that pool too. But I digress, when all I really want to do is to describe to you the strange situation in which we are all taking part in this theatre now. First, this is a modern stage which is very like a pasteboard box turned over on its side. You are looking into the open end of the box. In this box all sorts of things have happened—armies have fought and died, kings have married milkmaids, time has flown like the swallow, eternity has shown its inscrutable face. Tonight there is nothing very spectacular in this box—a tiny wooded grove, as I see it, and several hours from the age of myth, whenever that may have been. Well, anyway, there you are looking in, which is, theatrically, very conventional. Tonight, though, I have a similar device to escape you—which is theatrically, very *unconventional*. It is that little pool. You are looking into your box and seeing one drama and I am looking into mine and seeing quite a different one. Bul-

finch says it is a mirror pool—that I can only see myself in it. Naturally, I am not satisfied with this explanation, but to refute it here would mean to explain it to you and I could never do that for you could never understand. You must understand the basic situation, though, for I cannot say it more plainly. You are looking into a box; I am in that box looking into another box. Mine is a mirror (I shall humour Bulfinch in the interests of clarity)—but is not yours a mirror also? And if the penetration is a double one—you looking in at me and me looking in at myself or whatever it is in the pool—is not then the reflection a double one also by the time it gets back to you? If you are charmed even for a moment by my misery, once things get going in here, then are you yourselves not strangely miserable for being charmed? If you laugh at me then are you not laughing only at your interpretation of me, which amounts to laughing at yourselves? The play is full of such pitfalls, for it is a play composed almost entirely of reflexions, shadows and echoes. You are in a dangerous position, spectators, for the moment you realize any reaction to them, they become *your* reflexions, *your* shadows, *your* echoes. So, then, I am ready to surrender myself to my mirror, and I hope you realize that you are surrendering yourselves to yours. If you are ready, and in case you haven't read your program notes, NARCISSUS is looking into his pool.

(NARCISSUS is looking into his pool. LEANDER enters, unobserved. He looks distastefully at NARCISSUS for some moments, picks up a large stone, steals silently up behind the boy, and drops the stone into the pool with a loud splash.)

NAR: Fool!

LEA: *(laughing)* I make you ridiculous, so I become a fool.

NAR: The biggest kind of fool! The most loathsome kind of fool!

LEA: How vulnerable you must be to be angered by fools.

NAR: Only when they come swaggering into my world . . .

LEA: And getting you wet. You are a kitten whose fur is ruffled. That's why I'm a fool.

- NAR: Don't think you're not a fool just because you don't have clothes to get wet. You're a fool because you don't even *have* clothes.
- LEA: I don't need clothes. I have a rendez-vous.
- NAR: A peculiar substitute. If you are going to a rendezvous like that, you are also a vulgar fool.
- LEA: I am swimming to this rendez-vous. It is across the Hellespont in *another* world. I just couldn't resist dropping a rock in yours on my way through.
- NAR: What do you know of my world?
- LEA: Its first citizen and that it's little.
- NAR: Its *only* citizen. As to its size, a ruby seems little too to those who have no values.
- LEA: Well then by all means evaluate your world for me. Tell me what it's like.
- NAR: As if you could understand!
- LEA: Perhaps it's just that you couldn't explain.
- NAR: I could!
- LEA: Then do.
- NAR: Very well. Here. Look in this pool. What do you see?
- LEA: Myself. What am I supposed to see?
- NAR: Eternity. But you are also a blind fool. Now go away.
- LEA: Very well—but you have certainly not convinced me.
- NAR: It is not my occupation to convince ruffians.
- LEA: What is your name?
- NAR: I am called Narcissus.
- LEA: I knew it! When I saw you sitting there I knew you were Narcissus. That's why I threw the stone in the pool; I had to see you move; I had to hear you speak. What a disappointment you are. The nymphs told me you were a fount of arrogance; you are a petulant child. They told me you disdained love; you are unworthy of it. They told me you were a statue come to life; you are only pale. They told me your words were fierce and mysterious; they are immature. They told me your eyes were the lenses of eternity; they are bloodshot and lonely. They said you had found a world in a pool; you have only found a pool—a little pool. Your world is running down your face in little rivulets, Narcissus, because I threw a stone in it. The nymphs have been playing games with me.

NAR: This is the final irony! !

LEA: Say it to the world in your pool, Narcissus. I could never be impressed.

NAR: Exactly! That was my swan song you just sang.

LEA: What?

NAR: Yes. You have taken my enigma from me. Oh, I would have phrased it differently, I would have romanticized a bit—but I would have said the same things.

LEA: Why?

NAR: Because they are true. And when one is dying one is always sentimental enough to speak the truth.

LEA: This all seems unfair.

NAR: Not at all. I was dying when you walked in just now. I was composing my last thoughts which were just those and wondering to whom I'd say them. I decided on a peacock, finally, for my last confessor; it would have been too facetious to sing them to a swan. A peacock was a wise choice, I think, don't you? Peacocks are so aloof, so predictable. No one could be at all embarrassed saying his last tender words to a peacock.

LEA: You're not dying.

NAR: Oh, yes, I am!

LEA: You don't act it.

NAR: No, but I feel it and that's the only test. When you're living abundantly, you feel life within you; it takes on a definity. Well, death has taken on a definity in me. You know, it's very funny that I should spend my last moments convincing somebody that they *are* my last moments. Actually, you've given a fine freshness to them. First you angered me and that was exhilarating; then you sang my swan song for me and that was a difficult task done. My life is now complete and completed. It makes me feel that I may squander a few of the moments you've saved me.

LEA: There's really no one you'd rather talk with if the end is so near?

NAR: Should a peacock come by I might be swayed. Otherwise you will do.

LEA: Then you have never loved anyone?

- NAR: Would I be Narcissus if I had?
- LEA: Could you have lived this long if you hadn't?
- NAR: Remember, you are substituting for a dignified, predictable peacock.
- LEA: Exactly. And you're as ruffled as you were a moment ago with a fool. Most certainly you have loved, Narcissus.
- NAR: *Wanted* to love, perhaps, but I have not loved.
- LEA: There is no prize for such abstinence.
- NAR: You talk of *prizes*! What are they in your kind of love?—an armful of flesh and a string of deceptions.
- LEA: If you were not looking for an armful of flesh, which you could never find in there (*indicating pool*), or a string of deceptions—which, let me assure you, are far more pleasant than truth itself—what did you want in love?
- NAR: An equal. Someone I could talk with when the kissing was done.
- LEA: If you had found *your* equal, the marriage would certainly have been disastrous. Love is not an equation, a thing of perfectly matched wits, a tie of physical beauty which results in a lasting attachment. It's a supplement, not a duplication. You love somebody who's very unlike you.
- NAR: Peasant boys fornicate with sheep. I suppose that's love.
- LEA: You know it is not.
- NAR: And I suppose you know exactly what love is—you and whoever she is across the Hellespont?
- LEA: Her name is Hero. We *do* know *exactly* what love is.
- NAR: Is it worth swimming the Hellespont for?
- LEA: Two Hellesponts. Ten Hellesponts. I think everyone should swim a Hellespont just once to find his love on the other side.
- NAR: The raging Hellespont—it is the perfect symbol of the stupid bravado of your love—of your world.
- LEA: Oh, don't talk of worlds again as if you were an Atlas to hold one or a Colossus to stand on two. That is only a still little pool over there. There is no mystery to see in it.
- NAR: No mystery for *you* to see.

LEA: And none for you. How tedious you become, Narcissus. There is only one world, and you cannot ignore it any longer. You cannot talk to yourself, for you always know what you're going to say. You cannot ask yourself questions whose answers you have ready before you ask them. There is only one love, and it is not a mirror. There is only one Nature, and she is divine for she has produced only one Narcissus, and he is a fool.

NAR: How really splendid you are! Except for the statement about only one love, I would not change a word this time. It is the last stanza of the swan song as if you had known it by heart. To think that I must die because no one would sing it before.

LEA: It is not too late.

NAR: It is, for she said nothing.

LEA: Then you have loved!

NAR: *Could* have loved if she had only said, "You are a fool. It is a mirror."

LEA: And it is.

NAR: It is not! But I could have loved her if she had *said* it was.

LEA: Who?

NAR: No one. Nothing. Two colorless eyes that can only focus beyond me or beneath me. A little page of a face with no writing on it. Two taut little breasts that do not pound—that only tremble. Two sad little lips that have forgotten speech. A nothing. They call her Echo.

LEA: You *do* love her, this Echo, this little page of a face with no writing. I can see it. You are afraid of her silence more than you are proud of your own voice. Well, love away, Narcissus, and I'll admire you for it. Call her. Tell her you have been a fool.

NAR: Very well, I shall call her—but *you* can tell her, in your one-world eloquence. —Echo! *Echo!*

(ECHO runs in like a freshly-hired servant, eager but timid.)

NAR: Here she is—the radiant object of my affections, the armful of flesh, the string of deceits.

LEA: A full moon—a madonna! And you would have told all to a peacock instead of to her?

NAR: Yes, uncanny as it seems.

LEA: Why?

NAR: Tell him why, Echo. Tell him how worthy you would be of my last confidences and of my continuous love.

(ECHO makes no effort to speak except with her eyes.)

NAR: You see, she cannot say. She cannot speak. She is dumb, and to me that is not so irresistible as it might be to some lovers. Oh, a peacock a thousand times over. Have you ever heard a peacock cry? It is magnificent. I would have died in an electrified terror—not slipped into death out of one stilted quiet into another.

LEA: Say something, Echo. Tell him you are flesh and blood, warm and waiting. Tell him he's a fool, a ridiculous fool, if he can't respond. Save him, Echo.

NAR: (to LEANDER) Talk to the wind and the conversation would be more profitable. She might speak to you if she were a mountain away, if she were at the base of a waterfall, if she were at the other end of an empty corridor. But she requires that distance, perhaps because of pride, perhaps because of fear. She won't leave here until I tell her to, but she won't say I'm a fool. She can't. (To ECHO) Well, I am Echo, flesh and blood, warm and waiting. A fool! And if you had ever said to me that I was a fool—then I would have lived, to prove to you that I was not. As you are, I choose death and the peacock.

LEA: Kiss her, Narcissus. Unrequited love is a romantic farce.

NAR: Kiss her yourself. Kisses sit foolishly on a potential corpse.

LEA: Look at her and you can't die. Those lips aren't still; they're forming words that want meaning from you. Her eyes aren't colorless; they're a deep, wonderful blue. She is no nothing—she is a woman.

NAR: Then love her yourself. Make love to her here, now. Give up swimming the Hellespont if all this woman is right here within easy reach. I shall not be angry; I shall be thankful, as I am thankful for your other kindnesses of this last afternoon. Strike a little soul into this wad of clay. Make her a woman and I probably *shall* live. I would always prefer a stained wife to a virgin dummy.

(*To ECHO*) What do you say, Echo? Are you ready to learn *some* kind of language with the athlete here?

(*ECHO runs off.*)

LEA: Die quickly, Narcissus, or I shall kill you.

NAR: For procrastination?

LEA: No—for all the real lovers in the world.

NAR: And I shall haunt you for all the romantic lovers out of the world.

LEA: My patience is running out.

NAR: Well my time is running out, so stay collected. I told you to make love to her. Why didn't you if you were going to get so angry?

LEA: Because I am in love already, and so is she.

NAR: Would Hero be jealous?

LEA: It's not a question of jealousy. Hero and I were made to love each other. We have. You and Echo were made to love each other too, but you can't. *She* can, and I thought you could, but I have seen the contrary.

NAR: What is your name?

LEA: Leander.

NAR: Leander. If I have time before I die, I shall scratch in the sand: LEANDER LOVES HERO—THE RIGHT WAY.

LEA: The only way. The human way—for we are human.

NAR: If time permits I shall also scratch: LEANDER IS A FOOL.

LEA: Because he loved the human way?

NAR: No. Because he thought it was the only way. You are the blind fool I said you were if you don't see that I love Echo as much as you love your armful of flesh across the Hellespont. It is another kind of love—a love that crumbles and loses form when it becomes physical and positive. It is a fierce, quiet love—the strongest of all love.

LEA: If it is love, why was it cruel just then?

NAR: To keep it from becoming positive. To keep it super-human and unendurable—and yet able to be endured.

LEA: And where did you find this kind of love?

NAR: In the little world, Leander. In the little pool. If Echo could speak, she would tell you it was true.

LEA: It is not true.

NAR: Look and see.

LEA: I have.

NAR: But before you had seen the results of the other love. Look again in the light of your new information. Look in the pool, Leander, for the other eternity, the other beauty, the other transcendence. And while you look, I shall write in the sand what I said I would write.

(LEANDER kneels down at the pool and NARCISSUS begins writing on the ground with a stick.)

LEA: Nothing.

NAR: *(writing)* Look beneath the surface now that you know what you're looking for. LEANDER IS A FOOL. There. Do you see it, Leander?

LEA: *(looking)* No.

(NARCISSUS picks up a large stone and steals up behind LEANDER as he speaks.)

NAR: Look harder, Leander, for it is there. It has changed my whole life and Echo's too. If you cannot see it, then I have been right from the beginning and you are a fool!!

(He drops the stone in the pool. There is a little thunder in the distance and his victorious laughter is mingled with it.)

NAR: A fool . . . *(He stops abruptly, looks in the direction in which ECHO has gone, and cries plaintively:)* Echo! . . . Echo!

(LEANDER catches him as he falls and starts to lay him gently to the ground. ECHO runs in—sees LEANDER and runs off again in fright.)

LEA: *(calling after her)* Echo! Echo!

(There is a loud clap of thunder, and a flash of lightning. LEANDER looks quickly off to the other direction, calls "Hero", and runs off.)

—Curtain—

SCENE II

(The curtain opens abruptly. ECHO is weeping at the grave of Narcissus. As soon as she realizes that the curtain is open, she is thrown into a confusion. She dries her eyes rapidly, looks off angrily to whoever it is who has pulled the curtain so unseasonably, and finally decides that she must speak to the audience to clarify this error for them.)

ECHO: *(coming forward)* Can you conceivably forget what you have just seen? It seems an unfair thing to ask, but what you have just seen is totally irrelevant to this play as it is written. You were not meant to see me cry then. You are not meant to see me cry at all (as it will be explained in the dialogue) and if you have, it is owing only to the incompetence of the young man who is pulling the curtain. On innumerable occasions he has been told in the most explicit manner that the cast must be warned before the curtain is taken up. He will be told again tonight, you may be sure, but that will not help this performance unless you are willing to forgive his incompetence and to forget that I was crying. Imagine instead that I was sitting serene and unpredictable here at Narcissus' grave—a combination sphinx and Mona Lisa; for that is the stage direction. You will get the idea immediately, I am sure, for I have rehearsed long and am really quite amazing in that capacity. *(Moves to go, but then thinks to add:)* It's a great shame! If you hadn't seen me crying and if I hadn't felt it necessary to come out here to apologize to you for it, you would have found it quite impressive when I said my first line—after seeing the only two people who could speak disappear at the end of the last section. Now that little moment of delight is taken from you—by a little ninny backstage. Technical mistakes always detract from a play, but one like this is disastrous and unforgivable from an actress's point of view. For an actress of my age, the role of Echo is not easy to play under the best circumstances. I had the natural qualities to play Echo eight or nine years ago, but I can assure you that I've outgrown them. If

I've been giving a good performance this evening, it's only because I've worked hard on the part—and not, as I see some of you smilingly speculate, that the Echo I was eight or nine years ago is reverberating once again within me. It's simply not that at all. So please forgive this stage hand, whoever he is, and please forgive me for having felt obliged to apologize for him. Please forget too that you saw a crying Echo, if you wish to appreciate the play as it is written, and finally prepare yourselves to see her as she is described in the script: sitting at the grave of her Narcissus, serene and unpredictable, a combination sphinx and Mona Lisa, waiting for whatever is to come to come.

(She assumes the pose. Pause. HERO comes in from the direction in which LEANDER has run off.)

HERO: Hello . . . Young lady? . . . Perhaps you can help me . . . Young lady? Please—something dreadful has happened, I believe.

ECHO: It has been a day *full* of dreadful happenings.

HERO: Please be sincere and not foreboding. What I want of you will take almost no time. Let me be frank—I am half mad with anxiety. Look at me and you can see that it is love that provokes this madness. I did not sleep all last night, for love.

ECHO: I have been awake this whole night too, for love.

HERO: Of course you have—but you can remain placid. Try to imagine a love so strong that it drives one mad and then you will help me. Have you been here long?

ECHO: In this vicinity, as long as it takes for a heart to break and to crust over again. On the spot where I am sitting, since last night.

HERO: You have been here since last night?

ECHO: Yes—here, and *(indicating pool)* in there.

HERO: Please don't toy with me. I am not exaggerating my condition. With little or no provocation I could kill myself on this spot. Provoked any further and I would be capable of killing us both. Has anyone gone by? Answer me that.

ECHO: I don't know. I haven't been looking since last night.

HERO: Oh, think . . . try to remember! I know this must be some sort of religious rite you're observing, and I know I must be disturbing you, but I cannot live if I do not find this person. You do not remember *anyone* going past?

ECHO: One person, last night—just before the storm began and darkness fell.

HERO: A young man?

ECHO: Yes—he was young.

HERO: And noble, and brave, and closer to the gods than any other human creature?

ECHO: It was largely his youth that I remarked—his bravado, his immaturity.

HERO: Oh, no, that was not he. —How was he dressed?

ECHO: He was almost entirely undressed. His name was—
(*looking at the ground where NARCISSUS has written*)
—Leander.

HERO: (*reading*) LEANDER LOVES HERO—Yes! Yes, you see! I am Hero!—THE RIGHT WAY—How beautiful, the right way. The economy of a phrase like that! Yes, it was Leander who wrote all—LEANDER IS A FOOL! —Oh! What did he mean, Leander is a fool? Did you talk to him?

ECHO: No, but he talked to me.

HERO: What did he say?

ECHO: He told me to confess my love. He said my eyes were a deep, wonderful blue. He said a number of other meaningless things—and then he went away.

HERO: Ohhh! He has seduced us both and then betrayed us both! He said those same things to me and I treasured the memory of them—but then he came and repeated them to you and so they lose their value. He added LEANDER IS A FOOL for your benefit, I suppose, to persuade you the more easily to sexual promiscuity. We have both stayed awake this night for a glib and cruel seducer! Sisters we are, for he has stained us both! Ohhh!

ECHO: (*rising*) I am sorry. I can no longer bear your shouting and wailing. If there is any consolation in it for you,

you are the only stained person here. Your Leander was telling me to love someone else; he was saying that my eyes were blue for the benefit of someone else. It was that someone else who wrote there in the sand that Leander was a fool—but now I am sure he was right. Only a fool could bear your hysterical shrieking long enough to label his heroism and endurance love. Now please go. Your Leander is not here, but the boy I loved is. This is his grave and your behavior is a desecration of it.

HERO: Please do not send me away before you tell me of Leander.

ECHO: I do not care for Leander. I only cared for Narcissus and he is dead.

HERO: Narcissus!

ECHO: Yes, Narcissus—or rather the soul of Narcissus. The body died last night; I buried it this morning; and now I shall sit till I grow old and wise and talk with his soul, commune with his essence.

HERO: You poor thing. Wasn't Narcissus the crazy little boy who did nothing but stare into a pool? They said he swore to love no one.

ECHO: He did swear it, but he did not keep his oath. He loved a foolish dumb girl named Echo. I am she. He told me last night that he loved me, but I knew it long before. He told your Leander too, to show him what a fool he was to think that you two had found the only kind of love.

HERO: But we have!

ECHO: You think you have, but ours was greater.

HERO: Yours was nothing! You aren't even crying now that it is gone. Where is the devotion in that? Where is the passion?

ECHO: There is no need to weep; our love is still in me and (*indicating pool*) in there. That is because we loved with no passion as you know it. We loved with an intensity beyond passion—an intensity that admits no tears as it admits no kisses. You are only an armful of flesh—a string of deceptions. You have *sinned*; you have not loved. The real love is an intense suffering far beyond tears.

If I were to stop suffering, I would stop loving. I cried only once the way you are crying. It was when I saw Narcissus for the first time and blubbered that I loved him. He grew furious and called me a fool, and it was then that I stopped weeping and started loving. It is as essential today that I cannot cry as it was yesterday that I could not speak. The love of Narcissus and Echo was not the easy love of Hero and Leander.

HERO: You are as crazy as your dead lover! You mock my sincerity because you never loved at all. You cannot cry because you do not deserve to cry. You are a vegetable. Only tell me which way Leander went when he left you and I shall leave you to your vegetable sophistry. He did not swim the Hellespont last night because of the storm. Where did he go?

ECHO: He went to swim the Hellespont—to fight the waves and prove his love—to find his loved one on the other side, he said.

HERO: He did not swim the Hellespont, I say! I have waited for him all this night but he did not come.

ECHO: He did not come back, either.

HERO: The waves were too high for him to swim.

ECHO: His mind was too wrought to wait for them to subside.

HERO: But it was humanly impossible. The waves were ferocious; the gods themselves could not have breasted them . . . Then he is . . . (*silence from ECHO*) . . . Ohhh! Leander . . . Leander . . . (*She weeps*).

ECHO: I am sorry. (*Pause*) Please do not weep. I do not like to see it. If your lover is dead, show that your love was worth something finer than a flood of tears. Please do not weep.

HERO: I *shall* weep! I shall weep another Hellespont and drown myself in it. Watch me carefully, for this is what love is. Here is the soul, and not in conversations with a pool. Leander and I loved in beautiful, physical, obvious ways; there is the soul, Echo. We loved with lips and arms and legs and hearts. That is why he swam the Hellespont every night. Love is alive; it moves; it overcomes. We did not cry when we met; we laughed, and we did not

call each other fool for it. We laughed, and then we loved, and now we can weep. I shall weep until the whole world hears.

ECHO: It is stupid bravado.

HERO: It is love, Echo, something you don't know. It is not that you cannot cry—it is that you dare not cry—because you did not love!

ECHO: We did! We loved; we did not sin like you!

HERO: Then prove it. Come with me to the Hellespont and kill yourself. That is what I am going to do. Leander died for me; I shall kill myself for him. Weep for your love—die for your love—and then I'll call you sister and we'll go from life together and find our lovers again beyond it. I want to kill myself in the Hellespont for Leander. I want the world to know what complete and perfect love can be!

ECHO: I want to die beside this little pool. There is no need to tell the world of Narcissus' love and mine—for those who know of it will not need to be told.

HERO: Then you are lost. You are blind and deaf as you were dumb before. You are a fool who has not loved enough to weep, who has not wept enough to kill herself. Stay then, Echo—and if people pass by, tell them of Hero and Leander. They will weep—and perhaps teach *you* once again the art of tears. Try to weep, Echo—try to kill yourself one day. (*Looking off in the direction of the Hellespont*) Leander . . . Leander!

(*She runs off. ECHO sits down on the ground and talks into the grave—then into the pool, as if she did not know in which NARCISSUS really is.*)

ECHO: She did not understand, Narcissus, my love. She was a fool; she wept; she is killing herself. They sinned, Narcissus; they did not love. She is killing herself to find Leander's body in death. His body was all she ever knew of love. When that was gone, she had nothing left. I have as much now as when you were alive. I love you so much for never kissing me, Narcissus, for this way there is no cheapness, no chance for memories of physical

imperfection. We knew real love—and so I need not cry. Sleep well, my love; *I shall not cry.*

(She holds the pose, with a sort of half-smile on her face. After a moment, she glances toward the wings, half annoyed. Then she goes back to the pose. Slowly she begins to cry. Fighting back the tears, she looks furiously off-stage and cries:)

ECHO: Close the curtain! Close the curtain, you fool!

(It is too late. She is weeping heavily now. She is repeating the command to close the curtain as a young man in dirtied back-stage workclothes comes awkwardly forward.)

ECHO: *(starting quietly, hoping that the audience will not hear, and ending loudly and angrily)* Get off-stage! What is the matter with you? First you open the curtain too quickly and then you don't close it at the end of the play. Get off the stage!

YOUNG MAN: I love you.

ECHO: Don't be stupid. Who are you?

YOUNG MAN: Nobody. I love you.

ECHO: Get off the stage! *Close the curtain!*

YOUNG MAN: You're crying.

ECHO: I am not crying. I cannot cry. If I could cry and mean it, then one day I could love a fool like you. I love the Narcissuses of the world. I hate the Leanders. You are a Leander. Find a Hero, and don't ever pull the curtain on her and if she is weeping and a whole world sees her, she will thank you for it. I do not—so pull the curtain! Stop crying, you fool! *Stop it!*

(The young man is sobbing now. He sinks to the ground where she has been sitting.)

ECHO: Ladies and gentlemen, before I go to pull the curtain myself, I am forced once again to apologize for the time that has been wasted for you by this—*fool!*

(She walks off-stage wiping her eyes and the CURTAIN CLOSES in short little jerks on the tableau of the young stage-hand weeping.)

JAMES WRIGHT

The Ungathered Apples

I saw between a shadow and a bough
Two apples swinging. I was still beneath.
The nipples tips are dry and empty now,
And dry the earth.

But I was still alive, and offered hands
To stir the perfect balance of the pair,
Fumble and turn the blouse of woven leaves,
Lift the rose skin to air.

I laid my knee against a kneeling root,
Allowed a lower bough to hold my back,
And heard the limb beneath the quivering fruit
Sicken and crack.

Shamed for the clumsiness of my clambering bones,
Flung outward to the ground,
I lay and felt the judgment of the stones
Point without sound,

And saw, near heaven, globular and cold,
Depending on the bough I lay beneath,
The shadow of the ruddy and the gold
Bosoms that milked the earth.

And yet I held no anger. The slight lung
Of leaves went swelling round the globes,
Softly as though a naked woman sang
The ceremony of the fallen robes.

Surrendering, I lifted overhead
My quiet hands in hopeless prayer
For all the gathered apples of the dead
Hidden in cellars when the boughs are bare.

The Shade of Andrew Marvell Appears to His Housekeeper

*(Who Had Published His Poems Under the Pretext of Being His
Lawful Wife)*

For all I loved thy gentle eyes,
Thy golden calves and simple pies,
For all I lounged my afternoons
Away among thy forks and spoons,
For all I laid my aching head
To sleep against a cleanly bed,
And freely called my friends to dine;
Thou, Mary, wert no bride of mine.

Yet welcome thou whatever worth
Of gold or song my books call forth,
And buy a silk or gingham dress
To plume thy homely loveliness.
Whatever on the lawns I sowed
I cannot reap beneath the sod;
The book is sold, the flesh is lost,
So thou, dear Mary, bless my ghost.

Whoever cheaply reads my song
Cannot retain its essence long,
For that has flown to find its fair
Design above the human air,
The pure Idea's mother lode,
The dense Original of God,
Mountains of minerals that shine;
Thou, Mary, wert no bride of mine.

And yet be not my book explained
Away by heights it hath attained,
For there were plush green depths that wove
Among the flesh and fruit of love,
Green dancing thighs that swollen hung

About the trees, good lyres for song.
 Perhaps the body counted most;
 So thou, dear Mary, bless my ghost.

How vainly man hath riven this
 Pure heaven from the green earth's kiss,
 And shaven all his groves so clean
 Sweet apples may no more be seen.
 But thou art green and half-divine,
 Though thou wert never bride of mine:
 Thou hast not all of Eden lost;
 So thou, dear Mary, bless my ghost.

NORMAN N. HOLLAND

The Sparrow

(From the Anglo-Saxon prose of Bede's Ecclesiastical History. The Bishop Paulinus has spoken for the conversion of King Edwin and the King asks advice of his councillors.)

"This life, O King, it seems to me beside
 That time we know not of, as though in storm
 Of winter, you, your earls and thanes all sat inside
 At banquet, fire crackling and hall warm,
 While outside, wind swirled hail and sleet and snow—
 And should a sparrow come, fly through your hall,
 Swiftly in one door, out the other: lo,
 In that time he feels no snow fall,
 But that time is an instant, an eye's wink
 Warm between winter and winter. So do I think
 This life of men on earth, instant. What goes
 Before, what comes behind it, no man knows;
 If this new lore speaks anything more fit,
 Or certain, surely we should follow it."

DONALD FINKEL

Poem

The fairy in the next chair is telling
His barber about Horace. (He was a
Better poet, only he was so *cold*.)

Whereas the man on my hair told
Me that winter was here. Outside
A cold rain is preparing to fall.

With difficulty, and probably in
Some peril of shipwreck, Horace
Returned to Rome. At Philippi, his

Shield lay where he threw it. Praise
To Mercury, who in a mist huddled
Him to safety. Outside the mist is

Hardening into rain. The barber has
Confided to me that he likes a drink
Now and then (for the cold) but it is

Bad for business. Business is bad
All over. In the next chair the
Fairy is telling the man about

Restraint. Outside the winter edges
The day with rain. Business is bad
All over (excess and restraint). Squat

Horatius cautions against avarice. Behold,
What infamy and ruin rise from a large
Dish. Cold Flaccus remembers his shield

In Macedon, remembers the instruction of
Hunger. Now my rhyming heat is cooled.
Outside the rain practices a cold restraint.

BYRON VAZAKAS

Aunt Jennie's

A derby haunts the hatrack's smudged mahogany,
while through the hall, the stained glass transom lights
decay. The mustached man is gone. His suits
unwrinkle; and the arms hang down. Tobacco
fades. Wool coats distil his scentless absences.
Like explorations of tired hands, the pale
rejections of the past release regret,
release more ashes than stale, smoked cigars.
Lint loops the looping banisters. A heel-marked
gasbill scrapes the floor. Beyond portieres,
Eugenia still fingers Czerny to the
metronome. No tune unkeys her ivory
solitude. Her clipped harmonics lace,
unlace her brittle fingers, red and raw.
A whatnot curleques the dusk. The parlor,
darkened to the flies, closets reminders
like vague sounds from streets. Umbrellas,
rubbers, understairs, collect reproach. Eugenia
spins down the stool. As secretive as sin,
she treads the broadloom to the catkins' vase.
Nostalgia is history. The florentine-framed
doughboy on the shelf dimples the distance
from a war to war. Dusk damasks walls. Chairs
hollow loneliness. Desire in this room,
like light, sifts through to horsehair sofas,
mantel'd doves. Still, if Eugenia should turn,
she might, her music might excel the pattern
that this room laid down. The gasolier turned
low, she might expunge pretense, transform remorse,
her music tuneful to another self
more rich and real, and strangely melodious.

HERBERT GOLD

Truth and Falsity in the Novel

IN SOME EARLIER OBSERVATIONS ("The Lesson of Balzac's Stupidity", *THE HUDSON REVIEW*, Spring 1954), I suggested that it is proper to speak of the vision of a Balzac or a Dostoevsky as "true" even when it contains both individual statements and a view of the world with which we are in important or basic disagreement. What a great novel seems to give its readers is a communion in a passionate use of self. This general view about the function of novels may help us to specify what it is that is "true" about a novel—the lesson carried away into our own experience, the observation about the way of the world which we accept as accurate, the moral sense of the great heroes of fiction. Thus far, there is a confounding of two general uses of the word "truth". The word refers both to testable statement about the way things are and to some general ethical program which is intended to give dignity and value to human life.

It may be possible at least partially to disengage these two uses of the word "truth", as they are applied to the novel, by an empirical consideration of what novelists do.

Dmitri Karamazov's quavering redemption by Russian Orthodox faith seems unsatisfying to most of us (and to Dostoevsky, too). Yet we are satisfied by what happens to him. Why? Dostoevsky means to point out the truth about his religion, but we know that his affair is not so simple. He gives us in Dmitri the truth about the consequences of sensual passion when only the body is committed. He shows us in action the need to make some sense of life, to be conscious of more than of one's concupiscence and, by implication, of more than of one's consciousness; he tells us that a pride in the worth of others is required if we are not to murder or to commit suicide. (It would seem that an exaggerated proportion of Dostoevsky's population destroys itself. This is an illusion. A huge number of Americans have committed suicide without knowing it, and zombie-like they continue to do their work, look at television, and produce children during the midnight movie if it's not one they want to see.) The play of

Alyosha, Ivan, and Dmitri against each other and against their old man gives a sense beyond the static principle, Spirituality, Intellect, or Sensuality, for which each of them stands in schema. It is in the dramatic play of event, time-ridden, never-formulable, projected without precedent into the future, like a spurt of blood, that what we can call the "truth" of a novel lies.

It is therefore toward a general attitude rather than specific injunctions that we must look. The difference between emptiness and loneliness in a human person is made by location within a living social group. There is no meaningful society without loneliness and no significant personality without a place in society. To grasp the career of being human in groups calls for observations of the widest generality; the novel therefore requires intensely minute attachments to unique, private, individual lives if it is to make any general sense. We express our worldviews by the way we pare our fingernails.

2

"Truth is a characteristic of propositions." The senses in which we use the words "truth" and "falsity" ask definition; sentences in a novel differ from those, perhaps identical in form, which might appear in a work of abstract science (mathematics, say) or in a work of empirical science such as sociology. The logician's admission that "true conclusions may be drawn from false premises" is an important reminder of what often happens in life and in literature. True premises may also lead to false conclusions. Both of these statements, with their emphasis on the process of formal deduction, suggest some of the difficulties of using a category such as "truth" as if its uses do not shift radically from mathematical systems to empirical science to art.

In traditional mathematics, "truth" is deductive. (2 plus 2 equals 4) is true by the definitions of the terms "2", "plus", "equals", and "4". The experience of the calculator is not pertinent. The truth of the statement does not change in time, since the qualities of each of the terms are unhistorical; they have been decided once and forever, at least in so far as they pertain to this statement.

In empirical science the facts drawn are never really repeatable.

There is nothing complete in the definition of the fact, so that we can never entirely predict what the fact or the event will become in the unique period of a new hour. The city of Cleveland is altered at every instant, and altered now by my thought about it: it is a historical fact, profoundly obedient to history. Hume tells us that we have no guarantee that the sun will come up tomorrow; we do not now know nor can we ever know enough about natural phenomena to have the 2 plus 2 equals 4 sort of knowledge about them. However, we are surely justified in carrying out our daily activities *as if* the sun will come up tomorrow. This element of faith is required by astronomers, farmers, roosters, etc., if they are to make any sense of their lives. It would be vain to live by Hume's intelligent doubt, because that intelligent doubt itself would prevent any other intelligent thought. The astronomer would perish of incoherence, the farmer would be caught without seed, the rooster would never clear its throat in time.

The scientist after Hume is obliged to smuggle faith back into his system if he is to survive. He pretends that he knows that the sun will come up, only because it always has and his calculations depend upon it. What he has gained from Hume is a suppleness, an alertness to the limits of knowledge, and a fine modesty about the relative unpredictability of future events even within the domain of his competence. The great scientist continues to operate by absolute convictions which are "unscientific" and brute and necessary to his survival: that he has value, that he can do what he wants to do, that he can count on his knowledge and his instruments, that his wife will wait dinner for him. Science itself requires these unscientific assumptions. The faith of an Einstein that he can do what he sets out to do is unjustified by the facts available at the beginning of his labors: he leads the facts until he finds what he needs in order to ground his faith. If he had waited in doubt, without his intuition and his faith, then he would be operating by a variety of reverse faith—a distrust of his powers—which is also a decision in the world.

The decision to doubt is a dramatic one, involving consequences in either inefficacy or egoism which lead to a new and probably undesirable faith: there is no sense in moving, there is no judging or caring. . . . But even without sure knowledge, an active search-

ing for a right way to live is possible. In fact, the quality of mind called "suspension of belief" is never carried very far without becoming mental illness. At least some basic trust is required. I believe that my belt will hold up my pants, that the lettuce is washed, that my neighbor is not a homicidal maniac.

One of the truths which scientific scepticism and historical pessimism have made us forget is that confidence, hope, and energy are factors in the result of human situations. The quality of our attack is modified; our chances of winning are enriched. If I am suspicious of my neighbor, he will probably do something to justify my mistrust. But if Firestone says, "I will find something with qualities hitherto uncombined, flexibility, impermeability, hardness, etc.," he has a fighting chance of producing rubber. If he despairs, not. If you feel that you can win the girl's love, you have a good chance of doing it. If you look at her and say, "What could a fine pneumatic creature like her ever see in me?", this fine pneumatic creature will surely never see anything at all in you. If you believe, with a certain amount of grace, of course, that "She can't resist me", well, your chances are good.

When a woman has this sort of faith in herself, we call it charm and are charmed by it. There is nothing so attractive in all the world—and nothing so effective—as this assurance of value, pleasure, and self-respect. The maiden who believes that her legs are joined in an excellent way will move as if she believes it; her belief will make her friends believe it; the maiden's risk of hope will be rewarded by the woman's knowledge that she can be mistress of all she sees.

The conviction of value works in novels as well as in love. The prime-to-personality, dwelled-in, rejoiced-in conviction of Augie March's dignity as a person gives Saul Bellow's novel a permanent value. Augie March has the heroic charm which Oedipus, Hamlet, Joyce Cary's Gulley Jimsen, and Tolstoy's Hadji Murad possess, and the approval and confusion which publication of *The Adventures of Augie March* has occasioned is a sign of the rarity of this conviction in modern fiction.

Art—the novel here—is more empirical than the empirical sciences. Firestone's technique worked because he had faith and because the materials he stumbled upon had the necessary potentialities. With all the faith in the world, he probably could not

have made rubber from chicken feathers. But without the energy of his faith, he would have skipped by the materials which finally came out so profitably. He worked with an informed intelligence, he had an idea of what he was looking for, he believed it could be found; and the world responded by providing the necessary elements.

In the novel, however, the minimum of likely fact is reduced. The least promising materials can work beautifully, because the chief material is something which the author gives whatever materials hasard and his experience have thrown to him—passion, dignity, a commitment to value. The novel works because it works. The novelist's belief in the grandeur of being human is almost enough. As this belief is justified and as his hero partakes of this grandeur, it *is* enough.

If the writer does not have this sense for his people, he will produce mere Flaubertlings. An exciting contemporary novel like Nelson Algren's *The Man With the Golden Arm* is marred and forgotten too soon because, despite the density of response to a kind of world, the central character is seen as a machine whose destruction is pathetic rather than tragic. The attachment of Algren's senses to the material things of Chicago's Polish-American world is life-rooted and moving; his attachment to his people is indulgent and weepy. The slapdash novels of Joyce Cary remain green in our memories because the action is of meaningful people, valued for their humanity, their careers expressing in action a premise about life which is living and livable. The best of Cary's novels breathe the tragic grace: A man can build himself or tear himself down with dignity—he is alive.

3

The sentences of a novel are not "propositions" as the logician uses this word, designating an isolable formula which is either true or false. The purport of the novelist's sentence is modified in context to a degree unknown in the work of science. This is more than a difference between "denotation" and "connotation": the senses of the phrases of a novel are all confounded in the single forward thrust of action which is its prime meaning. The "truth" of a novel depends neither on the materials and theses (valid or

invalid) nor upon its conclusion or judgments (acceptable or not), but upon an injunction which resides as an implicit proposition in the notion of a controlled image of Man's desiring. The movement of the novel, carried by a host of sentences, is its meaning, just as rhythm, carried by a host of sounds, is the meaning of music. Aristotle calls this meaning "plot". The plot of a novel brings us its moral sense: *Desiring is good*. Or: *Desiring is doomed*. It may mean other things, too. But whatever the other attitudes, a commitment to desiring and dreading is at the center of every novel. The Bédier transcription of the Tristan story, the first modern novel, begins with these words: "My Lords, will it please you to hear a fine tale of love and death?"

Yes, it is this that will please us.

The passionate uttering of even the second proposition, that desiring is doomed, can work, as it does in the *Inferno* or *The Tempest*, two fine novels, to speak of the value of desire. The fine tale of love and death is always one in which desire has dignity. Doomed or gratified, desire is given value in the meeting of human souls. In either case, in a work which has a permanent place in our lives, the growth in time of a fictional character is a growth bound up within some attitude toward these propositions about want and will. Without them, there is only naturalism, which is false to our daily experience, or exotism, which is false to passion. Naturalism decides that the texture of experience is the whole of experience—and doesn't know how to grasp this texture. Exotism decides that certain extreme passions give the sense of life—and chooses a titillation of the senses as the extremest passion. Both are arbitrary and partial perspectives, although both can serve well in the hands of a writer who sees past their limits. Joyce "naturalistically" renders the sensations of Dublin street life; the episode in Bella Cohen's place is an exotic nightmare which scares us into pity and respect for Bloom's troubles.

But in the hands of the Huysman-Capotes or the Zola-Farrells, exotism and naturalism both leave us wanting in a curiously similar way. They have a great negative in common. They substitute for tragedy the novel in which time and personality are absent. A drowsiness of rhetoric replaces the sense of duration; personality makes way for the quirk and the twitch. Other qualities,

sometimes of a real pathos, are introduced, but the work is doomed to its narrow limits. Nelson Algren's novels so far are striking examples of fiction which seems to have every quality of the great novel except the most important one. Brilliant in rendering speech and sensation, he substitutes a maudlin pity in fore-doomed defeat for the deepest sympathy, the real thing. The image of man's desiring is controlled by being eliminated: a yawning emptiness is not loneliness, to suffer tantrums is not to desire. His people sigh, slouch, kick, gossip, and react. They are pathetic, but as they have no will, they are not yet human.

In the great novels, the image of passion—together with its mastery within the situation of passion—is communicated; the responsibility of the Karamazovs is accepted to the very end; we are convinced. The clincher is something which is said within us by the interaction of our own sense for life with the sense communicated by the novel. We may try to express this meaning in the form of a proposition, but as Mendelssohn said of the meaning of music, it is both too vague and too precise for words: the words act within us, using our emotions and our skills in the way that our instincts use our memories. Here is the meaning of the word "transported"; when we are moved, we are carried by something which uses our bodies—and in using my body, becomes a part of it.

"Truth is a characteristic of propositions." The essential propositions which make a novel's claim to truth often remain unstated by the writer; the statement which is made is sometimes a trivial one. We grind our teeth because the grasp of human experience expressed in action seems so much richer than that expressed in the voice of the author or his surrogate. Dostoevsky gives us judgments which we reject; his novel guides us to "true" judgments, true factually and true to our ethical needs. The reader states these truths for himself, driven by the novel's evidence, acting somewhat as a scientist presented by data which lead him to a conclusion. He also states them implicitly, in the rest of his life, by his way of living. A large measure of the reader's pleasure comes of this participation in an empirical venture. Novels are risks; good novels are alarms; they are always destructive of old conceptions. Participation in the life of a fiction invokes a change in our way of living (therefore our way of walking, talking, eat-

ing, working) that casts its echoes over the remainder of our sounding on earth. We are altered; we are also more coherent with ourselves.

It might be put again in this way: The words and sentences, the arguments and judgments of a novel gain their meaning only in the activity of a most general context of communication. In a novel we undergo feeling; more, we purify feeling; more, we act out and go on acting in function of the feeling which we discover in the process of communion within the world of the novel. The action is continuous between the hero and us. Without this "reaction" there is no meaning in a work of literature. Any single sentence removed from the perspective of the author's vision may seem to be saying something very different from the meaning which we take from the entire work. And there is no formal authority to which we can point as providing a definition of the sense of a single sentence of the text. Every phrase is lost in a history and a future which never stands still.

We thus receive permission from the form to be transported in the direction in which we are capable of going. This is the great good fortune of readers. While moved as Dostoevsky wants us to be moved, we draw a sense from "The Grand Inquisitor" sequence that would seem to him literally sacrilege. At the same time, the general area is one which the artist limits. Dostoevsky gives us a ticket to see his novel as depicting a number of crises, all within a general context of the production of social value in the light of anarchic individual desires; he offers us a number of dilemmas, constructions, and solutions. Our appointment, however, is with the problems of the Karamazovs, not those of the Joads. He has produced the situation, excluding some possibilities (the Joads, for example) but not aware of all the possibilities which he has included.

In this the novelist is like a man who waits for his wife's fertile period before taking her to bed. Joe Smith has good hopes of producing a child. It will be either a boy or a girl. Its name will be Smith. If he is a practicing Methodist, the chances are that the child will not be a Taoist. The child will bear the marks of Joe Smith's physical structure and personality all its life. However, in enormous areas events beyond Joe Smith will make the child and the child may make itself in a way which will shock him.

It will remain a boy or a girl, never becoming a canteloupe or a giraffe, and it may be unable to avoid hereditary baldness or a family disposition to stinginess, but it may comb so that you can hardly tell anything about the hairline and it may convert its stinginess into scholarship. You can never tell. In the Army I knew a sergeant from Oklahoma who claimed to be a Taoist.

Both have a rich history, but because a novel lives longer than the Smith kid its area of independence from its creator may be even greater. The novelist struggles and pants and sends his book out into the world—and the book which survives will always have the mark of a specific genius upon it—but not even J. Donald Adams can fix for us what the book “means”. This indeterminacy contributes actively, immeasurably, in determining the concrete perspective which will grow up between the novel and an individual reader. The novelist’s art is such that it can oblige the perspicacious reader to draw an opposite judgment from the one which the novelist, as a citizen of a specific time and place, chooses for himself. In some sense, then, the opposite judgment must be as definitely present in the work and author as the explicit one which he may assert with all his didactic fervor.

Nothing strange in this. The generosity within Joe Smith’s stinginess was undoubtedly already noticed by some dear friend. If we have any sense about people we are already used to hearing one thing and interpreting it as its opposite. “I don’t wanna be President,” the great man says, meaning, Please! “No,” a nice girl says, and means exactly *yes*. The dream dramatizes our sorrow at a father’s death, and means, At last! (He means: I’ll jump when I get the signal. She means both *yes* and *no*. It means both joy and sorrow.) The novelist’s sentences deal in opposites, as do the dream, the lady, and the candidate, and also in ambiguities, relevant irrelevancies, and gratuitous insults to our best intentions. The lady’s *no*, meaning, Bye-and-bye, Try again, and We’ll see, and many other things besides *yes*, and the dream’s tears, meaning, At last, What Next? and O I’m alone and mortal myself, and many other things besides joy, may both say one thing when considered apart and quite another when put in the flow of event which, given perspective by individuality, makes up human life. As the great man tells us, “The world situation has changed, my friends. Vote for me.”

Because the sense of a life cannot be isolated in single factors, Balzac's stupidities, bound up by his felt—that is, communicated—sense of the dignity of the human person, become the material of his wisdom about our affairs on earth. All that happens to him is implicated in his work. He participates. He is as awful and as driven as César Birotteau. He is capable of making what happens to him stand for what happens to us. He is causally involved with his world and ours.

The novels which grow out of a felt belief that human life has no dignity, and that the expectation of a community of action among men is trivial, are untrue both to our experience and our possibilities. These novels assert something about the world, but they don't tell enough and they tell it wrong. The emotional commitment brought by story-telling as a form makes us sense an effort to move the limits of what is being said from an individual case out to the limits of humanity. Paul Bowles' story about a professor who has his tongue torn out by Arabs depresses us not simply because it was a bit of isolated tough luck. The moral is not merely, Stay out of the desert, friend, and especially if you're a professor. Even if we have never considered buying a Ph.D., we are left fidgeting because a skillful writer has said that this is our fate as men: we are ugly, obscene, victims of accidents and sadistic devils, unfit for adventure and decision, easily made into beasts, doomed to incoherence and suicide. But this is not our fate as men. This is not what our effort comes to. The story is untrue.

When we say that a novel is "true", what we mean is probably something like this: Our sense of situation in the world has been fortified through a perspective which takes its meaning from a strong conviction of the value of human life, this conviction shared within an imaginative community of action. In a given work the conviction of value may be confined to a few individuals, and the community may be a small one, but there is nothing in the definition of either the people or the community which excludes the rest of us. The world is left open to creative diversity. The people are potentially joined by all those who make their own decisions and then value them. We are located in a definition of man and in a kind of society which makes desire, joy, and tragedy possible.

The definition suggested as a criterion of judgement will disinclude, at least from the haven of truth, some novels which are widely appreciated. Very well. There is no active sense of the decisive value of personality in the novels of writers as different as James T. Farrell and Truman Capote? All right, out with them. Quirks are not personality. There is no possible community of action in the doctrinaire Marxist or Catholic novel? Okay, sweep them clean. Programs and predictable solutions are not at the center of human striving; there is no exchange of virtue between the holders of Truth and the rest of us. We cannot imagine joining them except as an act of submission—that least decisive decision, the one which a dog performs so well.

Will there be any novels left?

Plenty.

The compliment, “true”, may still be applied to a work composed of falsehoods, providing only that the general perspective upon which the work opens out is one of an athletic and undaunted wrestling with the world. If we disagree with Graham Greene’s idea about the here-below, his novels turn hollow. When we disagree with Dante, we shrug and go on, our sense for living persons undiminished. It may seem that I am equating truth as a quality of a novel with something like courage, pride, and energy. Quite so, providing that these terms are properly understood. The proper understanding of them in relation to the notion of truth is in the knowledge that they give us the best and, finally, the only possible way of life.

4

At this point I wish to confess the obvious fact that I have used such notions as that of “truth” and “stupidity” in a deliberately ambiguous and polemical way. In an effort to produce a living image of an abstract category—a kind of novel—I have shifted the senses of these words without distinguishing them. I do not want to tell our novelists to be fools; dumbness and ignorance are poor recipes to creativity. They are not required. But the point that Balzac demonstrates is that neither is a conceptual or analytic intelligence required. Ignorance or knowledge certainly are limiting conditions of the novelist’s art; they are not

among the defining conditions. The defining condition, at least in Balzac's case, and I believe in more than his case, can be found in meditation upon his stupidity and its manifestations.

Some great writers, for example, Proust and Joyce, are smart. We are tempted to confound their keenness with their greatness as novelists. But another great writer, Balzac, is dumb and ignorant. He understood many things badly and lived grotesquely. If we can indicate wherein his genius lies, we may be able to return to Joyce and Proust and find some common meeting which will give us the profoundest significance of the novel as a form.

What Balzac had in common with, say, Proust and Joyce, is a ferocious and bullheaded obstinacy in living his vision of the world, and like the visions of Proust and Joyce, this one does not accept limits for purposes of control. Flaubert made a scared and limited gardening fashionable in the novel. Balzac among those before him, Proust and Joyce among those after him, never merely cultivated their gardens or relied upon artfulness. The only absolute for which Flaubert (or Henry James or Kafka) really strove was an absolute artfulness. The greater ones were willing to break themselves against every limit which they encountered. Once Balzac, Joyce, Proust, Tolstoy, or Dostoevsky got going, there was no submission to any gimmick, any special insight or faith, any partial discovery. (Dostoevsky kidded himself into a relative passivity as a man outside his novels, but not within them. Proust's evolutionary philosophizing diluted none of Swann's longing for Odette.) Their stupidity or obstinacy is surely not reducible to any mere creature vitality. It is a persistence, a stickiness of determination, an unflinching will to mastery which unites Balzac with the corrosive Proustian wit and the playful Joycean hurlyburly of words. Men like Henry James or Kafka, while coherent and vehement in their efforts to control their world, gave up the battle before they started by the limits which they put on that world and by the restricted possibilities which they saw in human affairs.

As William James notes, the great areas of expansion of the human mind have been those times when history seemed to say to the individual: "Reality is congenial to the powers which you possess." The true and great novel, or the novel which even pretends to the category of truth and greatness—an expansion

and exaltation of human possibility, properly understood—says to the writer as to the reader: “Life is congenial to your possibilities, although the struggle between you and the conditions of life may destroy you.”

If a critic like John W. Aldridge denies that our time can be seen as congenial in this way, then he denies the possibility of greatness in a novel. The little truths left to novelists will never touch the large one about human potentiality. But what about the fact that our time is a time of troubles? Certainly Pangloss is not the novelist we need. The reasonable alternative to a brave activity in a congenial time may be simply a virtuous performance in the face of history seen as a hostile audience: in other words, in a variety of stoicism. Now, while our days are hard ones and stoicism provides a life of dignity, it does not seem that any evidence at all could give this option alone. Acceptance of this single faith implies either a surpassing weariness or a fatalistic foreknowledge. The weariness is a personal disability, like asthma or a harelip, and should not be proposed as a kind of understanding. The notion that there is nothing more to do, the hand will play itself out, is one with which all human history has been plagued—it suggests a feebleness of both spirit and intellect. The evidence is never complete.

Effort is always possible, even in the moment before death. We have at least a few minutes. Achievement is still possible today, whether it be in the humble realm of constructing a longer-lasting and fizzier gingerale for television viewers or in the art of designing houses or in raising children or in working for better decisions on immediate political problems. Effort is imaginable. The image of energetic dignity is a homely one; therefore tragedy is possible; therefore great novels. We will all live in them.

The playwrights and novelists which our time requires will speak up at last, although they may seem to be tardy. The chief predicates of the novel will be qualities of will, sense, and human dignity. The option which I choose to name the “true” one is the one which commits itself to a thickness of feeling, a richness of time and change, and above all a high valuation of human life. This is commitment enough for the novel because it is the largest commitment which we can make on earth.

Q. D. LEAVIS

A Note on Literary Indebtedness:

Dickens, George Eliot, Henry James—

THOUGH THE MORE ONE THINKS about it the more inevitable it seems that the Romantic period must have discovered the sentimental uses of ancient Rome, with its melancholy and morally suggestive débris, discovered it, I mean, as a sympathetic literary background for the lovelorn or heart-broken, I have not found any instances of such a literary formula till the next age. Though indeed Childe Harold took his bleeding heart to Rome (remarking 'the orphans of the heart must turn to thee') and there appears to have adumbrated the general idea without precisely getting down to it. Whenever it was hit upon and by whom, however, to the Victorian novelists it seems to have become well known, as witness these three different but successive treatments of the theme:

(1) "Little Dorritt would often ride out in a hired carriage that was left them, and alight alone and wander among the ruins of old Rome. The ruins of the vast old Amphitheatre, of the old Temples, of the old commemorative Arches, of the old trodden highways, of the old tombs, besides being what they were, to her, were ruins of the old Marshalsea—ruins of her own old life—ruins of the faces and forms that of old peopled it—ruins of its loves, hopes, cares, and joys. Two ruined spheres of action and suffering were before the solitary girl often sitting on some broken fragment; and in the lonely places, under the blue sky, she saw them both together."

Little Dorritt (1857)

(2) "She had been led through the best galleries, had been taken to the chief points of view, had been shown the greatest ruins and the most glorious churches, and she had ended by oftenest choosing to drive out to the Campagna where she could feel alone with the earth and sky, away from the oppressive masquerade of ages, in which her own life too seemed to become a masque with enigmatical costume.

To those who have looked at Rome with the quickening power of a knowledge which breathes a growing soul into all historic shapes, and traces out the suppressed transitions which unite all contrasts, Rome may still be the spiritual center and interpreter of the world. But let them conceive one more historical contrast: the gigantic broken revelations of that Imperial and Papal city thrust abruptly on the notions of a girl whose ardent nature turned all her small allowance of knowledge into principles, fusing her actions into their mould,

and whose quick emotions gave the most abstract things the quality of a pleasure or a pain; a girl who had lately become a wife, and from the enthusiastic acceptance of untried duty found herself plunged in tumultuous pre-occupation with her personal lot. The weight of unintelligible Rome might lie easily on bright nymphs to whom it formed a background for the brilliant picnic of Anglo-foreign society; but Dorothea had no such defence against deep impressions. Ruins and basilicas, palaces and colossi, set in the midst of a sordid present, where all that was living and warm-blooded seemed sunk in the deep degeneracy of a superstition divorced from reverence; the dimmer but yet eager Titanic life gazing and struggling on walls and ceilings; the long vistas of white forms whose marble eyes seemed to hold a monotonous light of an alien world: all this vast wreck of ambitious ideals, sensuous and spiritual, mixed confusedly with the signs of breathing forgetfulness and degradation, at first jarred her as with an electric shock, and then urged themselves on her with that ache belonging to a glut of confused ideas which check the flow of emotion. Forms both pale and glowing took possession of her young sense, and fixed themselves in her memory even when she was not thinking of them, preparing strange associations which remained through her after-years. Our moods are apt to bring with them images which succeed each other like the magic-lantern pictures of a doze; and in certain states of dull forlornness Dorothea all her life continued to see the vastness of St. Peter's, the huge bronze canopy, the excited intention in the attitudes and garments of the prophets and evangelists in the mosaic above, and the red drapery which was being hung for Christmas spreading itself everywhere like a disease of the retina."

Middlemarch (1872)

(3) "Isabel took a drive alone that afternoon; she wished to be far away, under the sky, where she could descend from her carriage and tread upon the daisies. She had long before this taken old Rome into her confidence, for in a world of ruins the ruin of her happiness seemed a less unnatural catastrophe. She rested her weariness upon things that had crumbled for centuries and yet still were upright; she dropped her secret sadness into the silence of lonely places, where its very modern quality detached itself and grew objective, so that as she sat in a sun-warmed angle on a winter's day, or stood in a mouldy church to which no one came, she could almost smile at it and think of its smallness. Small it was, in the large Roman record, and her haunting sense of the continuity of the human lot easily carried her from the less to the greater. She had become deeply, tenderly acquainted with Rome; it interfused and moderated her passion. But she had grown to think of it chiefly as the place where people had suffered. This was what came to her in the starved churches, where the marble columns, transferred from pagan ruins, seemed to offer her

a companionship in endurance and the musty incense to be a compound of long-unanswered prayers. There was no gentler nor less consistent heretic than Isabel: the firmest of worshippers, gazing at dark altar-pictures or clustered candles, could not have felt more intimately the suggestiveness of these objects nor have been more liable at such moments to a spiritual visitation. . . . Even when Pansy and the Countess were with her she felt the touch of a vanished world. The carriage, leaving the walls of Rome behind, rolled through narrow lanes where the wild honeysuckle had begun to tangle itself in the hedges, or waited for her in quiet places where the fields lay near, while she strolled further and further over the flower-freckled turf, or sat on a stone that had once a use and gazed through the veil of her personal sadness at the splendid sadness of the scene—at the dense, warm light, the far gradation and soft confusions of colour, the motionless shepherds in lonely attitudes, the hills where the cloud-shadows had the lightness of a blush.”

Portrait of a Lady (1881)

Little Dorritt is, as Mr. Trilling has shown us, one of Dickens's finest novels, and we can see at once that the first extract has the virtues of Dickens without his frequent weaknesses. A simple idea is forcefully but not crudely expressed and *not sentimentalised*; though 'old' is decidedly overworked, still, the simplicity of technique is felt to guarantee the genuineness of the passage, and in fact we see on second reading that 'old' is used in different senses and has the effect of adding, as by a play upon words, some subtlety, like the pun in the title of *Hard Times*. In the last sentence the rhetoric, which in the previous sentence has been collapsing into verse, pulls itself together again and rounds off with a neat word-picture in poetic prose with a dying fall, where the images and idea they impart are economically brought into play together. The ruins of old Rome are the objective equivalent of Little Dorritt's former prison-life, moreover the operative words 'ruined', 'broken fragments' and 'lonely' in this last sentence are symbolic as well as literal sense, the discontinuity that Little Dorritt suffers from in her life, since it became prosperous, being reflected in her apprehension of the discontinuity of the concrete city's existence that surrounds her and brings home to her her plight. The idea, in short, has been used persuasively and with some delicacy, though it remains mainly a good idea with the rhetoric between us and the girl whom we are being told about and who remains the occasion for the rhetoric rather than, as it should be, acting it for us.

George Eliot, we know on much internal evidence, had read and used—that is, was unconsciously influenced by—Dickens. In reading *Little Dorritt* it is pretty clear that this striking passage impressed her by its vivid and condensed symbolism and gave her the idea of using the ruins of Rome as not merely the background, nor merely the symbolism, but the precipitating emotional

experience for her heroine. Like Little Dorritt a young girl whose life has lost continuity, Dorothea realizes on her honeymoon in Rome as she enters into the full consciousness of her surroundings that marriage with Mr. Casaubon has wrecked her own 'historical' life—brought disorder into the ideas of life that had guided her hitherto, shattered her hopes and made chaos of her emotional make-up. As 'Rome' is brought to her consciousness as a thing of many different and incompatible cultures, all at odds spiritually with each other and all alien, unacceptable and frightening to herself with her narrow Swiss-Protestant education and her provincial young-ladyhood, so she senses without clearly formulating for herself the fact that life now she is Mrs. Casaubon is something which she cannot assimilate or understand or bring into any relation with her ideals. This is not at all simple like Little Dorritt's situation and bears about the same relation to the Dickens original as higher mathematics does to simple arithmetic. The most obvious difference is that this is not rhetoric, the author is not pointing to a girl and telling about her, we are sharing Dorothea's experience of disorder in the depths of her being. Impossible to paraphrase the passage without changing and diminishing its meanings, for it is a complex kind of poetry, working on several different planes at once. Here is *the* example I should choose to illustrate what we mean by declaring that in the 19th century the novel took over the function of poetic drama. It is impossible to do the passage justice out of its context, for much of the earlier part of the novel has been preparing us for it and its roots are in Dorothea's past. We are to recollect, for instance, the earlier chapter where Dorothea is introduced to her future home and 'found the house and grounds all that she could wish', the dismal and old-fashioned manor house (symbolic of its master, Mr. Casaubon) 'had no oppression for her, and seemed more cheerful than the casts and pictures at the Grange, which her uncle had long ago brought home from his travels. . . . To poor Dorothea these severe classical nudities and smirking Renaissance-Correggiosoties were painfully inexplicable, staring into the midst of her Puritanic conceptions: she had never been taught how she could bring them into any sort of relevance with her life'.

The general gist of this highly complex passage seems then to be a sounding of Dorothea's disturbed condition which was both precipitated by and dramatically enacted by the concept 'Rome'. The 'sordid present' of the Papacy with its Catholic culture had profoundly shocked her Puritanic character; while the conflicting pasts—classical, represented by the statues whose 'marble eyes seemed to hold the monotonous light of an alien world', typifying Mr. Casaubon, and Renaissance, in 'the eager Titanic life gazing and struggling on walls and ceilings', standing for her own struggles for a fuller life—seem to embody the painful state of the 'girl who had lately become a wife' and who has to combine preconceived ideas of submissive 'duty' with unimagined reactions to her situation ('tumultuous preoccupation with her personal lot').

Clearly it is to this that the 'Forms both pale and glowing' refer, which 'took possession of her young sense, and fixed themselves in her memory even when she was not thinking of them, preparing strange associations which remained through after-years', as also the 'vast wreck of ambitious ideals, sensuous and spiritual, mixed confusedly with the signs of breathing forgetfulness and degradation'.

If the passage is found to be obscure and incoherent, that is because those are qualities of Dorothea's feverish condition which is being recreated for us by the methods of poetry; actually the passage yields its meaning unambiguously to the reader who is prepared to take the trouble and does not demand the logical sequence of descriptive prose, such as we get in the Dickens passage. What we get here is the simultaneous presence of all the different layers of perception and emotion that make up Dorothea's unresolved crisis. The fact that she has no control of her experience but is at its mercy is given in the psychologically apt description 'images which succeed each other like the magic-lantern pictures of a doze', and thereafter the sentence moves frankly into the recreation in poetry of the fantastic fever of her state, 'a sordid present' where all the sense-images and their emotional correlations are fused, with the final triumphant 'red drapery' of St. Peter's 'spreading itself everywhere like a disease of the retina'.

If (2) is an example of how a great writer constructively uses, by extending and deepening, an invention of a less profound artist (1), then (3) is, in its relation to both the others, an example, however engaging and accomplished, of the parasitic. It would never have been composed, that is clear, if the Dickens and the George Eliot passages had not been there to provide the inspiration and the execution; we could see that even if we did not know in other ways that Henry James had read, been impressed and obviously influenced by, both these novelists. (3) does not, like (2) in relation to (1), carry the stamp of the integrity of the truly creative; it is the use of a great piece of literary creation by a writer who has read it with admiration and envy and consciously or unconsciously made it his own by imitation. This is the commonest of events in the production of poetry, novels, literary criticism and music. The signs are always dilution, sentimentalisation or vulgarisation of the original, lack of unity and drive so that the force of the original is wasted and dispersed, and—because the unique original occasion for the creation of the admired piece of work is absent—an obvious lack of rooting. (3) has become picturesque instead of poetic. The integration of Dorothea's experience of Rome's complex culture with her experience of being a bride and a disillusioned wife—the one shock reinforcing because recreating unmistakably the other—is replaced in Henry James's version by an external picture full of sentimental touches and 'charm'—e.g. 'taken old Rome into her confidence'—and where the general replaces the particular, the abstract the concrete—e.g. 'a spiritual visitation', 'the sug-

gestiveness of such objects', 'she felt the touch of a vanished world'. Instead of clinching like Dickens and George Eliot he ends by wandering off altogether from his theme into an Impressionist painting, any effect he has achieved (vague, general and inchoate as it was) being thus completely dispersed. In fact his eye and attention are directed throughout to making an appealing picture in which Isabel really counts for nothing. There is, significantly, a Paterian quality, in his use of cadence and phrase and the merely aesthetic intention, about the final sentence. Isabel's disenchanted situation after marriage, imitated from Dorothea's, is merely staged against a sympathetic backdrop of Roman ruins and romantic Catholicism; the passage as a whole is insignificant and disappointing, betraying its derivativeness everywhere but showing no justification for imitating one of George Eliot's most striking creative achievements, which is in her a key-passage and a crisis in a profound work of art. Nor has it even the virtues of the admirable Dickens passage, which James also had clearly possessed himself of and unconsciously drawn upon in (3). So unrealised is Isabel's postulated suffering state that no suffering, no feeling at all, is conveyed to us, we are only presented with a composition of vaguely melancholy charm, lacking the firm handling of an original conception shown by both (1) and (2) and which stamp them as first-hand. Having started with this passage from *Portrait of a Lady* I went on without any effort to make a list, covering several sheets, of passages and effects in it directly parasitic upon passages in *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*.

The whole question of indebtedness in literature (as distinct from 'influence') is not only interesting but important and seems to have received little attention. As my analysis of these three passages has shown, I hope, there are two distinct kinds of indebtedness, that exhibited by George Eliot and that betrayed by Henry James. I might make the point briefly by putting it like this: as (2) is to (1) so is *Wuthering Heights* to *Lear* and *Macbeth*, or *Pierre* to *Hamlet*, or *Washington Square* to *Eugénie Grandet*, or *Pride and Prejudice* to *Cecilia*, or *Belchamber* to *Vanity Fair*; while as (3) is to (2) so is *Quality Street* to *Cranford*, or *The Cenci* to Shakespeare, or *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* to various poems of Wordsworth's, or Mr. E. M. Forster's story *Other Kingdom* to Meredith's *The Egoist*.

OLIVIER TODD

Paris Letter

WHILE THE FRENCH IN GENERAL SEEM AT THE MOMENT a little amorphous if not discouraged, French intellectuals are still driven by the impetus of post-Liberation days. They have been disappointed in many ways, materially as well as spiritually. Mme Jeanne Laurent, who until recently held an important position at the Ministère des Beaux Arts, described not long ago this aspect of the official relationship between French writers, painters and musicians and the centralised powers of the Fourth Republic which, in spite of the avant-garde aura which it has throughout the world, is still a great patron of the pompous, the sterile and the dead. If one takes into account the low taste of the vast majority of cultural consumers, one will realise that in contemporary France it is not, as is too often supposed, easy to be an honest artist. It may be worth while to underline this because in Paris one frequently comes across Americans who through some peculiar optical defect, probably due to the favorable rate of the dollar, tend to think that it is easier to starve in Paris than in Rome, London or New York. Once and for all, one should get rid of that attractive legend inherited from the 1920 novels in which *vin rouge* and *bifteck frites* were more easily ordered than paid for. As there are fewer para-cultural jobs here than, say, in Great Britain, and as they are, like literary journalism, poorly paid, a young writer, if he wants to survive, has either to teach—and that is how we regularly have a new generation of *agrégés*—or contribute to the trade of hack writing. The danger of the latter course is that it often leads serious and gifted young men to the manufacturing of a certain type of best seller. In many quarters, this is often justified on the grounds that literature being a futile activity anyway it might as well be a profitable one. There are dozens of talented writers who have thus committed intellectual suicide. This is definitely a new phenomenon in France.

Nevertheless, one must admit that in 1955 as in 1930 or 1890, the general atmosphere in Paris is alive and stimulating. There are probably more opinions and more ways of expressing them than in any other place in the world. For the *printed* word there are no taboos. When literary historians sort out the works of the period, they will—thank God—find them very difficult to classify. There are schools and doctrines, but members and adepts tend to branch off according to their idiosyncrasies. Between 1945 and 1950 there was a boom of *isms*; people were generally defined, and described themselves as Marxists, Existentialists, Personalists, Lettrists, Surrealists, Abstracts, Socialist Realists, Figuratives, and so on. Now a work of art tends to be examined, welcomed or rejected as the product of a particular temperament rather than that of a

theoretical outlook. Few new writers offer a powerful vision of life as did the pre-war or the post-Liberation masters. To use an expression of Koestler's, creative artists are not suffering from absolutitis as they used to.

This does not mean that the sweet art of polemics, always thriving when doctrines are at stake, is dead. Far from it. The most recent example has been provided by the publication of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's book *Les Aventures de la Dialectique*. Merleau-Ponty, after having been a member of the atheistic existentialist group which gathered around Sartre and his monthly review *Les Temps Modernes*, has separated from the author of *L'Être et le Néant*. This move, apart from its philosophical or allegedly philosophical implications, smacks of the Freudian death-of-the-father. In the last few years, Sartre has been "murdered" several times, not only by the very respectable Merleau-Ponty, who is now a Professor at the Collège de France, but, with varying degrees of refinement, by people as different as the Communist Kanapa and the Bakouninian Camus, not to mention Etiemble, Lefort and Rousset. Just as before the last war one had to settle for oneself the André Gide and the André Breton questions, now one has to settle the Jean-Paul Sartre problem. Undoubtedly the most influential contemporary French writer, he has thus been the amused victim of innumerable parricides.

Merleau-Ponty had more formal affinities with Sartre than anyone else. Both developed many of the implications of the German phenomenologists—Sartre with a metaphysical and literary enthusiasm, Merleau-Ponty with the lack of passion of a classical psychologist. Technical disagreements existed, but they were academic. Now they have parted on the question of Communism or, to be more precise, Marxism as it is dealt with by Communists. After having very violently attacked the Marxists and their historical determinism, which did not fit in with his conception of freedom, Sartre, without giving up the main tenets of his philosophy, stated in three extremely complex articles entitled "Les Communistes et la Paix" the ways in which he was prepared to agree or disagree with the Communists in France. Merleau-Ponty, setting this particular problem in a wider context, attempts to show the decadence of "dialectics". He examines the evolution of its meanings in Max Weber, Georg Lukacs, Lenin and finally in Sartre. Merleau-Ponty's style is cryptic in the extreme. It is doubtful whether this question—which is of great interest to people trained in the French tradition—could attract those who have not been brought up in it. Merleau-Ponty's description of Sartre as an "ultra-bolshevist" is rather unfair. He argues that for perhaps the first time a non-Communist has set down some of the ideas which a Communist ought to hold about History and about the function of the Party.

As far as Merleau-Ponty himself is concerned, this book shows once more that he is happier when dealing with straightforwardly technical questions as he did in his most important work, *Phénoménologie de la Perception*. This may

be partly due to a certain lack of literary vigor, immediately felt in a country where, for good or for bad, the best literature and the most interesting philosophy are constantly overlapping.

Still one must agree that on the whole recent literature—creative literature—has been less theoretical. Serious young writers are not as they were in the late 40's professional or amateur philosophers. Novelists like Camus very definitely had a grandiose ethical view of life and they tried to justify it by the elaboration of philosophical systems. Nowadays, works of a genuine quality tend to be more limited in scope, less universal. The most important novel published in the last few months, Simone de Beauvoir's *Les Mandarins*, is a case in point. Compare it for instance to what was until recently her best work, *Tous les Hommes sont Mortels*. This philosophical tale conveyed a general moral outlook, valid in its age, an atheistic humanism. But Simone de Beauvoir's last work does not answer questions, it puts them. In this long novel, the problems of the non-Communist Left-wing intellectuals in France have been described in such a way that the book with all its defects will remain not only as a work of art but also as a landmark in the history of French sensitivity. There is nothing surprising in the fact that the most outstanding novel to come out for some time should have been written by a woman. For the part played by women writers in French literature is now quite extraordinary. Novelists as different as Marguerite Duras, Hélène Bessette, Françoise Mallet-Jorris, Thyde Monnier, Nathalie Sarraute, Renée Massip and Célia Bertin prove that novels written by women need not necessarily describe life from a less objective angle than those written by men.

The novel in France is flourishing qualitatively as well as quantitatively. Together with its search for new themes goes a preoccupation with formal problems. Many recent works show an opulence of style which would have been undreamed of a few years ago. Take for instance a fragment of Jean Reverzy's *Le Passage*—the admirably told story of an agony; the author describes a feeling of sickness growing on his hero:

. . . En quête d'un impossible secours, Palabaud aspirait vainement l'air tiède du matin tropical. Vomir lui semblait une issue honteuse; l'esprit repoussait un acte symbolisant trop clairement la maladie et plus loin la mort. A un désir de santé, à une force spirituelle pure se heurtait le flot envahissant de salive et de bile qu'il avalait avec peine. . .

And then take the following lines describing a similar situation in *La Nausée*:

. . . Alors la Nausée m'a saisi, je me suis laissé tomber sur la banquette, je ne savais même plus où j'étais; je voyais tourner lentement les couleurs autour de moi, j'avais envie de vomir. Et voilà: depuis, la Nausée ne m'a pas quitté, elle me tient.

From 1938 to 1954, the approach to language has changed. The differences between these two passages are not only due to the varying approaches of the writers. The "thickness", the density of the first, the brisk, breathless tempo of the second are characteristic of the best styles of their respective decades. A detailed comparative analysis of the styles used by contemporary French novelists in the last few years would bear out this generalisation. At one end of the scale one would have the rich profuse writing, the best example being Marguerite Yourcenar's *Les Mémoires d'Hadrien* and the worst Julien Gracq's precious and gaudy writings; at the other end, the nervous, rapid style of Camus' *L'Etranger*. Many of our most interesting novelists, many of those who are really worth reading—Robert Merle, Hervé Bazin, Roger Nimier, Serge Groussard, Roger Vailland, Luc Estang, Antoine Blondin, Alain Robbe-Grillet—are aiming at a style which would communicate the compactness of experience and the discordant themes of their heroes' universe.

On the whole, while experiments in the field of the short story—which has never been quite at ease in French literature since Maupassant—are not conclusive, the new generation of novelists is constantly producing highly encouraging works.

The state of poetry is much sadder. It is undergoing a definite and painful crisis. It is impossible to point out one original young poet. And to get one's essential dose of poetry one must look for it in the more sophisticated songs of Léo Ferré, Georges Brassens, Philippe Clay and Francis Lemarque, who are incidentally responsible for the renaissance of the music-hall, one of the most striking features of life in Paris today. There is more poetry in the popular songs of these new troubadours than in the printed plaquettes which contain the matter commonly offered as poetry. Some years ago, the best publishers did not hesitate to lose money on it. Now they cannot even consider it as prestige advertising. In the reviews where poems used to be found, they have often completely disappeared. But the poetical drought is not only due to a prosaic public. Supply is as limited as demand. Most young poets are still entangled in their private symbols. The more nefarious aspects of the influence of surrealism can be seen everywhere. Furthermore, technical problems are either neglected or reduced to simplified formulae as in the case of the numerically important group of Socialist Realist writers: under the crushing doctrinal hand of Louis Aragon, they have decided that French poetry ought to go back to its so-called traditional forms. Consequently, we are provided with crude alexandrines and ridiculous sonnets. The revival of this myth of a unilinear French tradition is anything but successful. At best it shows that there is considerable uncertainty in the minds of poets. There is no doubt that a new theoretical outlook is required to retrieve poetry from meaningless, unmusical rhapsodizing and dry, formal assertions. If a thoroughly new outlook is not found, poetry will be entirely absorbed into other artistic media, that is to say

that the general public will look for it where they shouldn't—on the stage and on the screen. There have been signs of this transfer. Georges Schéhadé's plays, long poetical monologues presented as dialogues, are a significant example.

The plain truth is that today in France, poetry, like painting, is in a cul-de-sac. A painfully conscious search for traditions, as with the Socialist Realist poets, is always a bad sign. In the case of painting, we find the same alarming symptom. A recent art show at the Musée Pédagogique on "L'Art Gaulois" was an attempt at proving that French art is not merely of latin and classical origin. By exhibiting with it reproductions of paintings of other periods and modern originals, it tried to show that the celtic, romantic, vein was as strong if not stronger. The demonstration was unfortunately not very conclusive, mainly because it made use of vague concepts like "line", "rhythm", "intensity", and so on. The only evident feature was the strong decorative character of many of the gaulois statuettes and coins. The same is true of the collective exhibition, at the Galerie Craven, of the thirty painters now called "The New Paris School". Atlan, Chastel, de Stael and the other artists undoubtedly have in common certain ornamental qualities, but they only constitute a school in so far as they all indulge in a kind of abstract impressionism. They all refuse to go off the beaten track of paintings which merely match the lampshades, pottery and furniture to be found in the many arts and crafts shops which are sprouting up all over Paris. Younger artists like Buffet or Garant who have put to themselves the questions which their elders seem to have settled once and for all, are much more interesting to watch. Most of the time, as one toils through the galleries concentrated in the sixth and eighth arrondissements, one becomes more and more depressed by the uniformly uninspired quality of the works displayed.

With a slight feeling of guilt one comes to look in films for the emotions which ought to be provided by poetry and painting. This is all the easier since the cinema has been accepted in France as an art on a par with, say, poetry. (This would not be true of England where people when they discuss it outside the Film Societies are always slightly diffident.) Most of the enlightened spectators in France have accepted the fact that films are now more expressive of our civilisation than plays or even novels. Significantly enough, the yet infantile science of filmology was born here and is still going strong under the guidance of Gilbert Cohen-Séat. Its sociological research is often invaded by obscure metaphysical considerations but its spirit has made many critics mature. A comparative study of current film-criticism in France, England and America, limited for instance to weeklies and monthlies, would most certainly show that the French critic haunted by the subtler *meanings* tends to be more profound in his outlook—and unfortunately less humorous—mainly because his public expects him to treat films as seriously as novels.

This does not imply that the French production is superior to that of other

countries. Paradoxically enough, recent films have been shockingly unambitious. A tiresome sophistication about gangster and detective stories and dithyrambs about "suspense" urged Becker to concoct *Touchez pas au Grisbi*. Decoin shamelessly plagiarized him in *Razzia sur la Chnouf* and Clouzot elaborately constructed his thriller *Les Diaboliques*. The only really solid achievement so far, in contrast to a vast quantity of technically well-made but thoroughly empty films like *Série Noire*, has been the fairly convincing and therefore more powerful *Du Rififi chez les Hommes*, made by an American director, now living in France, Dessin. From the point of view of language these films are interesting. Like the detective novels from which they are often taken, they use the juicy and relatively unknown jargon of the French underworld. But it is doubtful whether its rich vocabulary will renew dialogue, if only because of the limited range of ideas and emotions which it can and wants to convey. Still, the very existence of this movement is significant of a certain unrest among the craftsmen of the trade. It is not enough to argue that they are forced to make these films for financial reasons. This might perhaps be said of the relatively unknown authors of the straightforwardly commercial Lemmy Caution series, "starring" Eddie Constantine, which merely provides a new idol for the more infantile section of the public, but this kind of explanation cannot satisfy one in the case of someone like Becker. For the moment, André Cayatte is the only one of the great French directors who has not given up his aims. He is going on with his fresco of France's legal institutions. Like those which came before, his last film, *Le Dossier Noir*, is full of mistakes and *fausses notes*, but one feels behind it—apart from courage and generosity—a driving strength and a sincere preoccupation with truth. Cayatte may be benefitting from the general atmosphere of craving for anything concerning the police. The complexity of the plot in *Le Dossier Noir*, compared with those of *Nous sommes tous des Assassins*, *Justice est faite* or *Avant le Déluge*, is perhaps an effect of this atmosphere, but certainly not a concession to it. Cayatte never panders to his public. His work as a whole constitutes a fragmentary but significant picture of French society seen from one particular angle. It raises questions by giving them concrete representations even though it often appears somewhat unsubtle in doing it.

Most other directors seem to avoid all problems nowadays. They escape either into bright legendary universes, as Renoir does with *French Cancan*, or into a melancholy dreamland, like Duvivier in *Marianne de ma Jeunesse*. The French cinema may be recovering from the realism and neo-realism of the last ten years, but its convalescence is not very successful. One must admit with regret that few really excellent films have been made in the past year. Those who consider the cinema as an important means of expression must either go and see a foreign production like Fellini's *Strada*—universally acclaimed here, partly perhaps owing to the surrounding flatness—or fall back on revivals like

Abel Gance's monster, *Napoléon*. This barbaric and at times sublime work has been offered again to the general public at the same time as Sacha Guitry's new and incredibly silly film on the same subject. The renewed interest in Napoleon Bonaparte is a curious phenomenon. It manifests itself in comic strips as well as in the publications of innumerable books which provide original or ancient pictures of the man who is still one of our most ambiguous heroes: every Frenchman, Left and Right, is shamefully proud of this myth-man if ever there was one. One only hopes that this sudden passionate interest does not correspond to a longing for the arrival of "a strong man", who would impose nicely uniform aesthetic patterns in all fields.

VERNON YOUNG

The Japanese Film: Inquiries and Inferences

IT IS NO DOUBT UNAVOIDABLE, our culture being what it is—an upstart and afraid in a world it never made—that more nonsense than pertinence has been uttered and written on the subject of the Japanese film. At this stage of our familiarity, the main obligations of criticism should be to abjure responsibility for knowledge it can't be expected to display and to try clearing the air by asking a few honest questions. Most of us who write about films may as well relax and confess that we know nothing at first hand about Japanese movie production; that all we have as data has come to us from press-sheets, from quick consultation with the nearest Japanese bystander, or from a handful of factual essays; that whatever else we may know of Japanese art is the sum (probably meagre) of having taken an 'intelligent interest' in Japanese prints, of having been exposed academically to the matter of Japanese influence on the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, of having read two Japanese novels and a few slim volumes of poetry, of exploring, post-*Rashomon*, whatever we have been able to find useful in the way of analogy and of seeing the 'unaccredited' performances of Kabuki. Beyond this, except for the fortunate few who may have been in Europe with sufficient frequency since 1951 to see others of the dozen or more Japanese films exhibited there, we have been shown precisely five in the United States on which to establish generalities. (Of these, two—*The Impostor* and *Hiroshima*—scarcely merit extended consideration, and we owe the selection of the big three to the enterprise and good taste of Mr. Edward Harrison)¹. This little piggy stayed at home and he is by now somewhat wearied by those who primarily see the Japanese motion picture (let's just say *Rashomon*, *Ugetsu* and *The Gate of Hell*) as a by-product of Japanese decorative and theater arts. He is equally wearied by the Orientalists (home-grown or otherwise) who are patently well informed on the minutiae of Japanese culture but who know little or nothing of cinematic art.

There is a prevalent and not altogether accurate analogy in emergent use between the Japanese film and Japanese "painting". Before this easy observation goes much further, we should plainly ask *what kind* of painting is implied for reference and which of the three films usually invoked actually exemplifies, in more than a superficial way, such a comparison. We have been specifically informed that Kazuo Miyagawa, the cinematographer of *Rashomon* and *Ugetsu*,

¹*Golden Demon* and *Musashi* have been definitely acquired by American distributors and we may expect to see them early in 1956 or before. Negotiations are under way for Kurawasa's *Seven Samurai* and Mizoguchi's *Yokichi* (entered this year at the Venice Film Festival), both Daiei Corporation productions. (September, 1955.)

is a student of traditional Japanese art, and we may assume that a large number of the technicians on these films share his absorption. By reference to single frames in *Ugetsu*, I would infer that both India-ink drawings and the wood-blocks of Hiroshige might very likely have been Miyagawa's inspiration. But a specialist would have to confirm my inference and further specify the models, if any, for the photographic style of *Rashomon*, which, to my view, nowhere suggests Japanese painting in any media. And in *The Gate of Hell*, quite dissimilar effects are achieved by Kohei Sugiyama, owing as much to their composition in Eastman color and to their formal derivation from the constructs of Eisenstein (in the opening episodes, especially) as to their kinship with kakemonos, woodblock prints or folding screens. I am now prepared to add to the confusion myself by contending that the film which to me egregiously suggests Japanese water-color-and-ink textures is not a Japanese film at all, but Arne Sucksdorf's occult documentary of Swedish wild life, *The Great Adventure*.

Both the photography and music of the Japanese films have come in for a certain amount of cavil. Here the purist struts and frets his hour. I have heard an allegedly responsible teacher of aesthetics claim that the lighting in *Ugetsu* was "too dim". And in the magazine *Film Culture* (March-April, 1955), an excessively disgruntled "Oriental critic" (he was so programmed), Ben Pinga by name, after donning a hair shirt, took to task the producers of *The Gate of Hell* for their failure to make the Buddhist message more explicit, for not being consistent in their musical scoring and, above all, for having "played up the visual splendor of the subject at the expense of its ideas and meanings". Leaving to someone with more time on his hands that charming cognate, "ideas and meanings", I'll content myself with fearing that the accusation of which it is the nub will meet with scant agreement. Without conceding that generally held opinions are more valid than minority ones, I find Mr. Pinga's downright perverse, but I dare say that the degree of beauty one can support in a given context is not measurable. The more recherché quibbles fall strictly within the province of the experts but I am not intimidated by Mr. Pinga's self-identification with this category, in the face of his innocent belief that the cameraman of *The Gate of Hell* was also the cameraman of *Ugetsu*. Nor am I much more impressed by the scolding, every bit as stern, administered by Gordon Hendricks (same magazine, same issue) to the musical director of *The Gate of Hell*. In considerable detail and with an air of authority as indisputable as his petulance, Mr. Hendricks discoursed on the nature and social usages of the *koto*, the *samisen* and the *shakubyoshi*, and crushingly deplored the occasional employment of Western strings and of drums "played in a Western scale". I would be willing to knuckle under to Mr. Hendricks' agitated defense of authenticity and I'd even promise myself to listen more objectively when I see *The Gate of Hell* again, if it were not for the very grave

impasse into which the writer led himself by his retrospective criticism of the *Rashomon* sound-track.

Proudly involving Archer Winsten of the New York *Post* in his shock-reaction, as if this agreement certified his sense of outrage, Mr. Hendricks fulminated against Ravel's *Bolero* used "to back up a 13th-century legend" (a description which, while we're brushing the subject, requires qualification; the literary material on which Kurasawa based his adaptation came from two short stories by Ryunosuke Akutagawa, who committed suicide in 1927). I think we must all have been alarmed by the *resemblance* of the bandit theme to the *Bolero* (that it is literally the *Bolero*, note for note, I doubt) but I hope a majority of the baffled suspended their judgment in favor of the belief that Kurasawa might reasonably be trusted, like any serious artist, to know exactly what he was doing. That Kurasawa did know is ably supported by James F. Davidson in a most edifying article, "Memory of Defeat in Japan: A Re-appraisal of *Rashomon*"², which is indispensable reading for any further speculation on Kurasawa's masterly film. To summarise a single point of Mr. Davidson's exposition: at one level of interpretation, the bandit represents—the West! From this clue, you may deduce the ramifications for yourself but I urge you to read Mr. Davidson. In any case you can see at once the sardonic function of the music's alleged impurity.

Stylization is probably the most ambiguous conception currently over-exercised. A semantic difficulty, I'm sure. No one bothers to distinguish between the stylized, the conventional, the generic, the abstract or the stereo-typical. Japanese milieu, in art and life, being what it is—rigorously fashioned with a consistency which in our world occurs only under special conditions of place, economy, temperament and influence—our interpretation of its quality is pardonably confused. Sometimes pardonably. Into an aperitif served to the readers of *Fashion and Travel*, "Style: and the Japanese", Truman Capote stirred a doubtful ingredient: "A half-comparison might be made with Restoration comedy: there is at least the same appreciation of the artificial; *and it is true* that in the gangster thriller and cowboy genre Americans have produced *a classically stylized form* of code and behaviour". (The italics are mine—believe me!) Mr. Moritoh, meet Little Caesar and Mr. Shane. I'm sure you three gentlemen will have much to discuss. . . . Mr. Capote is in safer hands when he repeats Arthur Waley's observation that a principal characteristic of the Japanese aesthetic is dread of the explicit. But I am certain that different levels of aesthetic and, conceivably, different occasions, are here involved. *The Gate of Hell* affords many instances of this dread, expressed with lovely indirection, but it also features that extraordinary moment when the samurai spits a mouthful of water into the face of the unconscious Lady Kesa. Sexual insight has not often been rendered so ruthlessly, with no dread whatever of the explicit.

²*Antioch Review*, XIV-4, Dec. 1954.

And *Rashomon* is as fearlessly expounded, which brings me into argument with another authority.

Since Harold Strauss has the support of past residence in Japan, I have read with some attention and even humility his recent articles on the subject, but when he describes Machiko Kyo's laughter (in her taunting of husband and brigand in *Rashomon*) as stylized, I am prompted to challenge further what seems to me an increasingly general misuse of the term. Quite simply, stylization implies a *reduction* or a *crystallizing* of elements, but I appeal to Elie Faure's elaborate definition (evoked, incidentally, by this very matter of the Japanese principle, in Volume III of his *History of Art*) to assist the relevance of my objection.

An erroneous distinction has often been made between the process of reason which consists in stylizing a form and the process of instinct which tends to idealize it. Idealization does not re-form an object; it reconstructs and completes it so as to deduce the most general, the purest, and the most hopeful meaning that the object has for man. Stylization adapts it to its decorative function by systematizing the characteristics which appear in practically a consistent manner when the form is studied. The artist saw that all forms and gestures and all architectures in repose or in movement retained certain dominant qualities which defined them in our memory and which, when accentuated by schematic processes, could be applied to decoration with the utmost exactitude. . . .

If this distinction is as acceptable to others as it is to me, the application of "stylized" to the scene designated can surely be called into question. To my feeling, that moment of laughter is the almost intolerable climax of a sequence characterized by primordial realism. Miss Kyo's laugh may well ring in one's ears after the last film has faded from the last screen as a consummate outcry of sub-human derision. . . . I would say that this actress's face makeup was conventionalized, if you like, as it was for *Ugetsu* and for *The Gate of Hell*, and that the court sequences of *Rashomon* (where the film audience is the tribunal), in passive face-front contrast to the restless movement of the camera in the woods, were formalized, after the suggestive mode of the Noh drama, as Mr. Strauss pointed out in his *Harper's* article.³ The meticulous relationship of figures to the architectural spaces wherein they sit or move, a conspicuous feature of *The Gate of Hell*, but not uniquely Japanese, is simply a theatrical, or plastic, sense of proportion; it would illustrate Faure's sense of the stylized if its gestures and other elements were submitted to an elliptical and unrealistic continuity. (Yesterday's European Expressionist theatre was, in its own way, as stylized as Noh.) Only in *The Impostor*, among the films shown here, a commodity item of the Shociku Corporation, owners of the Kabuki-za, is there

³"My Affair with Japanese Movies", July, 1955.

considerable, if not subtle, treatment of this kind (the mock duels, the fixed character traits and so forth).

The reception of Japanese film acting has not been unanimously charitable. Embarrassed by the vehemence of the Japanese actor, and even by his repose (notable in Kazuo Hasegawa—Moritoh in *The Gate of Hell*—who generates tremendous force while sitting completely still), many Westerners attempt to account for their discomfort at the phenomenon by some such explanation of it as stylized or “artificial” acting. When the performers, seized by paroxysms of violence or anguish, throw themselves on the ground, bellow, grunt and gnash their teeth, embarrassment may give way to facetiousness. From unexpected areas of the critical world, where you would suppose some effort might be made to rise above a subjective reaction to alien manners, have come unwarranted disclaimers, of *Ugetsu* markedly. John McCarten’s flippant review of this film in *The New Yorker* was the least excusable; I make this assertion not from any belief in the balefulness of wit (I usually find Mr. McCarten quite funny) but from an assumption that jeering at an unfamiliar mode is not a vice permissible to a critic. At least, not without more authority than I suspect Mr. McCarten can lay claim to. The most unflattering verdict on Japanese histrionics was delivered long since by the French poet, Henri Michaux, in his ferociously brilliant travel memoir, *A Barbarian in Asia*,⁴ but it was the fruit not of a single film but of several months of theatre-going in the Orient.

No actor in the world bawls like the Japanese with so little result. He does not speak his part, he mews it, belches it, and he trumpets, brays, neighs and gesticulates like one possessed, and in spite of it all I do not believe him.

All this is done on the side, ‘to decorate’. The frightful contortions he makes in the effort to represent his sufferings merely express the hell of a trouble he is taking to express suffering; it is suffering expressed by a man who no longer knows the meaning of it (a lot of esthetes, all of them) in front of an audience of esthetes, equally ignorant of the subject.

A loud voice that reeks of prejudice a thousand miles away, of life taken up by the wrong end, a background of ancient impostures and obligations, and a series of second-rate notions, but spelled with a capital letter, in the midst of which like the voices of the Categorical Imperative (the great master of Japan) the poor characters move about, victims, subordinate creatures, but giving themselves, as one might expect, great swashbuckling airs, with a peculiarly decorative type of courage, and there is such a lack of variety that one sees why in the *No* plays they wear a mask and why at Osaka the actors are simply wooden marionettes, lifesize.

⁴New Directions, N. Y., 1949. Tr. Sylvia Beach. First published in France, 1933.

There is much more of this, very amusing, very perceptive and very cruel. If I had less respect for Michaux's fabulous gift for psychological impressionism I would hesitate to present such a persuasive corroboration of the latent xenophobes among us. As it is, I am willing to accept his prejudice for the sake of his vivid accent, but I reserve the right to claim that I've not been similarly affected by actors in the Japanese film. Furthermore, I am strongly convinced that however "decorative" Kabuki-trained actors may have seemed to Michaux on the stage in the early 1930s, they have been forced by the exigencies of the interior drama which has constituted the screenplays to substantiate their emotions by a more complete involvement. Clearly the principals of the three films under discussion understand the meaning of the suffering *they* are expressing! And this, I think, is not the least wonderful result of the Daiei company's so-called compromise with the West. If the psychological realism and the dynamic editing of these films is a consequence of Western influence on Japanese style, we cannot but be gratified by their instinctive conquest of our domain. The motion picture is by its nature and its origin Western. A *pure* Japanese film is a contradiction in terms, for it could only be an even more awkward compromise between film and theatre than *The Impostor* has verified. The "stylized" theatre of Japan—Kabuki and Noh, if not Bunraku—will presumably survive in its own right, but the Japanese film will have to develop away from the broadest theatre conventions in order to be film at all, and a transformation of the acting technique is naturally of initial importance.

As a matter of related fact, many people find a full expression of emotion equally intolerable in our own theatre and movies. I have seen audiences highly disturbed by a passionately committed Shakespearean actor or one from the Yiddish theatre, and I am neither referring to or defending the elocutionary high-style. Blanche Yurka in Classical drama, Katina Paxinou's animal outcries of grief in the otherwise farcical film, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, Peter Lorre's grinding falsettos, Anton Walbrook's broken-voiced speech before the curtain, in *Red Shoes*: the popular aversion to these strenuous displays of feeling is less than a rational distaste for an art *démodé*; it is fear of vitality. In his projection of strong emotion, the 'natural man', with few regional exceptions, uncalculatedly brings into operation a distinct physical style, determined by factors of his physique, his occupation and his social conditioning. Any crisis-acting not founded on the re-creation of such emotion and such style, skillfully heightened, is inadequate to its source. But a population grown effete finds the shallow-breathing Olivier, for glaring example, a suitable vehicle of tragic feeling. Toshiro Mifune, the bandit of *Rashomon* (a soldier whom Kurasawa 'discovered' and then Kabuki-trained), has more kinesis in his feet—literally in his feet!—than Olivier has in his entire body.

I have not elaborated these details for the sole purpose of outflanking the cognoscenti. I think it advisable for the unprepared attender to Japanese films

to beware of the footnoters before he has assimilated his own unguarded experience, and to discriminate for himself between what is deeply universal in these films and what is special to them. Further considerations of decor, lighting, of color, histrionic subtleties and so on will present themselves for analysis when we have seen not only *Musashi* but also *The Tale of Genji*, *The Life of Oharu*, *Seven Samurai* and *A Woman's Life*, all period pieces. The extent to which we have been charmed by costume films will be tested when we have seen the best of Japan's films on contemporary subjects, which will probably be a long time off. That these will pass the test there seems little question, judging by reports on such films as Kurasawa's *Living* or *Drunken Angel*. We consider Kurasawa a man apart, but many Japanese critics will not have it so and assure us that directors whose work we've seen no samples of are equally significant. We await the evidence. Meanwhile, on the evidence available and beyond the reservations of the experts, we can acknowledge that the heart of the Japanese film is animated from below the luminous surface. No matter what contingencies of the world market Daiei productions have been designed to meet, they have touched—above all, in *Rashomon*—the deepest and most implacable concerns of man, with cinematic values unmatched by any present body of film-makers, possibly excepting the Swedish.

Reviews

WILLIAM ARROWSMITH

All About Ripeness¹

PREDILECTIONS ARE OUR WARMER CHOICES, and Miss Moore's newest collection of critical essays is her choice of what in our time, for impassioned perception and honest *brio*, she is grateful for. Mostly she is grateful for good poetry—for Eliot and Auden, for Williams, Stevens, Cummings and Pound—but also for Pavlova ("that which is able to change the heart proves itself"), Sir George Sitwell's *On the Making of Gardens*, and the memories of good people and good places ("the compacted pleasantness of those days at 152 West 13th St.") from her *Dial* days. What takes her heart and eye is always that precision of feeling, "abandon born of security", "impassioned explicitness", gusto heightened by concentration and enabled by humility; give her these happy intensities, and she will forgive, if not quite forget, any crudity but falseness. Thus what fascinates her in Williams is his "bee's sense of polarity"; he is "Argus-eyed, energetic, insatiate, compassionate, undeceived". She admires in Stevens that "delicate apothecary of savors and precipitates", by whom "no hauteurs are violated", and she says magnificently of him:

Upon the general marine volume of statement is set a parachute-spinnaker of verbiage which looms out like half a cantaloupe and gives the body of the theme the air of a fabled argosy advancing.

In Henry James she is gratefully aware not only of the "rapture of observation", but of the affectionate familial James, the warmth and rurality of the "rediscovered Small Boy". Pound's *Cantos*, she says with more rightness than six essays and a book by our arrogant Poundaletti, are "an armorial coat of attitudes to things that have happened in books and in life; they are not a shield but a coat worn by a man, as in the days when heraldry was beginning." In Auden she can see that suddenly surprising "Orpheus of our mountains, lakes and plains"; his liberality and his fresh and compelling "stature in diversity" are what touch her, so different from him in everything but final control. But it is thanks to poets like these (and gardeners and dancers and novelists) that there is truly "fire in the brazier", that tact and intellect proudly approve the insurrectionary eye, that conduct comes alive without deception and for joy;

¹PREDILECTIONS, by Marianne Moore. Viking Press. \$3.50. AN END TO INNOCENCE, by Leslie Fiedler. Beacon Press. \$3.50. THE OPPOSING SELF, by Lionel Trilling. Viking Press. \$3.50.

and it was wholly, I think, in thanks for such performance that these essays were first written and now collected.

It is rare that criticism should be so cleanly and completely devoted to thanks, and rightly rare. For gratitude like this is not concerned with the ample vapors of professional bread-and-butter, nor with analysis, nor even finally with judgment. It speaks to the point, in full knowledge, grateful for *these* lines, for such a sensibility as *this*, for *this* splendid candor. Sincerity is everywhere guaranteed by perfect understanding; praise for one poet does not mean detriment to another; the analytical murk and and pother of judgment lie a long way back, jobs long since done, but which tact here excludes as hindrances or a pointless show of self, where the self has no business. She can be as candid as she can be generous, but her candor is oblique, stated at times almost as a gap in the sense (and the more blunt for being so), comprehensive by allusive tact. Thus she can say obliquely of Stevens, "interrupted soliloquy can amount to disrupted logic", and she knows clearly and hints of the cost of injured sensibility in W. C. Williams, his crotchety hickish suspicion of English form. The essay on Louise Bogan closes so squarely on the difficulty of her verse, but also so delicately, without apparent reproof, that one might almost suspect Miss Moore of straying from the point; but Miss Bogan could hardly think so. These perceptions of errors of tact, put obliquely and with kindness of understatement, do not trouble her central tenor of praise. *She* might say perhaps, the flaws hardly damage the achievement, or that she was no more out for authority than she was for carping. We know, what she never intended, that Miss Moore has the largesse of authority.

It is this virtue of tact—what she calls humility—that is most striking in her criticism, and something like this tact, generalized into loving technique, explains, I think, the difficult texture of her poetry. Thus we feel in her criticism and verse, not that the self has been annulled, but that it has taken up a distance which alters the familiar relation between perceiver and object. The new relationship is neither "objective" nor "subjective" (Miss Moore's criticism is *never* merely impressionistic), nor in between. It is, essentially, a distance of love, Stendhal's *crystallization* compounded with knowledge. What is strategy to us is natural to her: she sacrifices all of herself which does not bear on what she is observing; if she succeeds, she merges with her object, taking its explicit coloration as it takes her substance. We feel the loss of poetry's familiar personal self as restraint, distance and a revealing discretion. Reality, we know, puts no purdahs down; but Miss Moore's poetry does, and does so because she imposes humility and tact on her objects as much as herself, suffusing observation with love. By stripping both things and self of their portentous symbolhood or accidents, she invests the commonplace with humility, and so renews it, taking from it that dry *magnificat* that is her forte. For the same reason, tact perfected in love, her criticism creates the illusion that there

is really nothing there but great poetry, lucid and fresh. Miss Moore is not perhaps what we think of as a professional critic, nor does she assume the larger burdens of Mr. Fiedler and Mr. Trilling. But in terms of what she does she has everything to teach. At least I find no difficulty in thinking that a critic, as gifted with perception, who could emulate her tact and love, and then enlarge upon it, might write a new and a major criticism.

Mr. Leslie Fiedler's *An End to Innocence* is a collection of essays which stands deliberately outside of Miss Moore's tradition, avoiding tact because the purpose is either missionary or polemical, and explicitly committed to a public and cultural, rather than a literary and private, criticism. The essays—all organized to an unusual degree under the rubric of the title—range through an angry discussion of Hiss, the Rosenbergs and McCarthy, to an Italian perspective on American culture, and finally to American literature itself. The overwhelming preoccupation of the book is the stipulated sense of innocence—the crude populist innocence which produces McCarthyism (and I would suppose the crude suburban innocence which preferred Eisenhower to Stevenson), the atrocious intellectual innocence of the *soi-disant* sophisticates who defended Hiss or took the Rosenbergs seriously, the needful European dream of a violent and innocent America, and finally the felt innocence of American writing as a tradition. By innocence Mr. Fiedler normally appears to mean something pejorative, a quality of adolescence or cultural immaturity, or even that kind of romanticism which, because immune to fact and necessity, can compose the world to fit as its needs and illusions require. There may be some grudging admiration for the triumphs in tragedy and pathos wrested from their own innocence by writers as splendidly self-deceived as Whitman, Melville and Twain (at least in Fiedler's quite unconvincing interpretation of them), but in general the book is an intelligent programmatic call for maturity in American culture and writing.

To transcend innocence, to arrive at ripeness, tragedy and an intelligent acceptance of our cultural necessities: these are ends with which the most innocent will concur. Even our most urgent commitments to ripeness, as Mr. Fiedler is well aware, sometimes conceal a deeper innocence. Mr. Fiedler is himself neither deceived nor, except incidentally, innocent in his own sense of the word, though he battles for maturity with considerable callowness. He brings to his task transparent honesty and passion and a great deal of cleverness, as well as a refreshing willingness to talk with solicitude about something else than formal literature; he is, with few exceptions, susceptible to experience and literature which lie outside of his own position of secular liberalism, and he is peculiarly deft in removing the hard patina of cultural meanings and attitudes encrusted in a work of art. I could myself wish that the vigor and intelligence of Mr. Fiedler's political liberalism were more prevalent than they are, but I record my gratitude for a liberalism grounded on necessity and there-

fore committed to intelligent hope. It is this grasp of possibility and necessity, however tenuous, which after all differentiates Mr. Fiedler's liberalism from the doctrinaire naivete of Mr. Irving Howe's left and Mr. Russell Kirk's intransigent right. In it lies a good part of our hope of ripeness.

The central difficulty of Mr. Fiedler's book is the muddiness of what he means by innocence and maturity. What, one wonders, does maturity entail, or is it, as Mr. Fiedler seems to suggest, merely the habit of aversion for one's adolescence? What is the quality of ripeness, if ripeness is all? If we need new habits, as we surely do, these habits need more than negative definition, and it is here that Mr. Fiedler's book is at its weakest. For while it may be sufficient triumph to have evidenced maturity in throttling innocence, Mr. Fiedler's penchant for attacking the grosser and more obvious types of innocence operates to impoverish the maturity he means. It is, after all, no secret that intellectuals, their pride of intellect cut off from recognition of necessity as from a fate, are depressingly liable to grotesque innocence. The most glaring example of our national artistic innocence is, as Mr. Fiedler knows, no less a person than Ezra Pound and his appalling cult. But is it only Mr. Fiedler who realizes that the dupes of the Rosenbergs were fools, or that the writing of Truman Capote is transparently infantile? The angry rage and the clever sarcasm which Mr. Fiedler lavishes on his dummy intellectuals make one wonder at times whether he never talks with *other* intelligent men and has not himself usurped the whole liberal tradition in lonely maturity. Yet Mr. Fiedler, I am sure, intends no such arrogance; it comes as a consequence both of his compulsive cleverness and his failure to document his thesis with illustrations worthy of it. And these failures in turn rest upon the crucial ignorance of what he intends; you may find out much about innocence in Mr. Fiedler's book, but all the talk in the world of folly won't necessarily produce much wisdom. Yet because American innocence—its pervasiveness, its crippling unsuspected authority as myth and habit, the power of its masks—makes such a crucial and compelling subject, it is disappointing that a book by a critic of Mr. Fiedler's persuasions and abilities should be so marred by poverty in its particulars and its substance. Mr. Fiedler apparently believes that his ends will be best suited by polemic, and he is clearly pleased if he succeeds in being irritating. But I doubt that he is a good polemicist and I doubt that he has succeeded in producing real irritation—except perhaps among those who can—like myself—be counted upon to agree with him in the first place. Yet there are good things here, and I would be unwilling to suggest that it is an easy task to improve them. Ripeness comes hard, and Mr. Fiedler is working harder than most of us.

All the unuttered maturity that sparks, without really informing, Mr. Fiedler's programmatic tirade finds rich substantial expression in the nine essays which Mr. Trilling has brought together under the aegis of *The Opposing Self*. Maturity, even an attractive wisdom, are what we have learned to expect from

Mr. Trilling, and this newest book shows him in full possession of his old skills: that genuine humor, his fine historical sensibility for the "clotted past", that feeling for creative, as well as destructive, interplay between individuals and their culture, and that tact of humane perception. All these are here, gifts and skills alike, the old critical habit of concern compounded with a fresh solicitude for the cost to culture of our firmest convictions and a new feeling for the crucial, complex surface of things. Those who honor Mr. Trilling because his criticism has so clearly uttered for them that tension between the best of Arnold and the best of Freud, and what that tension signifies, may perhaps be disappointed by the book's apparent preference for Arnold over Freud, its pervasive mellowness and insistence upon the texture of the surface and the quality of our hold upon it. But, if anything, the preference is for Arnold the poet, not Arnold the critic, taken at that point where much of the old tension between Freud and Arnold is resolved. There are no longer two planes, but the surface has deepened.

Here, then, are nine essays, dealing almost entirely with the nineteenth century, yet all written in solicitude for the twentieth. The ostensible *point d'appui* is the creative conflict between selfhood (or, rather, the making of a self and thus of a destiny) and the myth or the fact of a culture at the moment of its surprise by the reality of life. By culture Trilling intends less the institutionalized artistic culture than those unconscious formulations embedded in manners, habits and valuations so deep as to be almost inaccessible (the sense, for instance, in which we might speak of Wordsworth as culturally a Christian). The self is conceived of as opposed to its culture in "intense and adverse imagination"; by the fact of opposition, it comes upon itself as on a fate and thence upon the "idea of a culture . . . with the possibility, and the necessity, of its own redemption." By the self's adverse imagination of its culture, Mr. Trilling means, not the pure hostility of the social or cultural rebel, but a readaptation of the sense of Arnold's saying that poetry is a "criticism of life". The artist is the Scholar Gypsy whose very existence criticizes our life in culture, the "experience of art projected into the actuality and totality of life as the ideal form of the moral life", which is intended to "disturb us and make us dissatisfied with our habitual life in culture".

This seems at first blush an all too familiar thesis: the artist as the mock-heroic Don Quixote of the real, breaking his lance against the windmill of routine, and so, to his own great cost, refreshing the quality of our culture. This is, after all, what we have been told again and again that Proust and Lawrence and Yeats and Pound and the other artistic rebels did, as we have been taught to be grateful for their apocalypse. But what is so pleasantly different in Mr. Trilling's argument are the values and the artists he invokes on its behalf. Not Lawrence, but Howells (Mr. Trilling mentions that he was warned by a student that his interest in a dull author was causing a

scandal in the cafeterias); not everybody's proper formal James, but the James who had a mother and a father and a sense of familial sacredness; not Gide and his compulsory eagle, but Wordsworth and the dignity of joy like Hillel's; not Kafka with his certainty of guilt, but Keats with his conviction and courage of identity. If Mr. Trilling's book has anything so melodramatic as a villain, it is that omnipresent appetite of modern taste for the pure encounter with evil, our Manichaean insistence in literature and criticism for the reality of the sickness unto death, our drive for what Mr. Trilling calls the "unconditioned spirit", that is, our contempt for the material and social condition in which spirit is compelled to live. And so all of his heroes—even the Howells and the Orwell who Mr. Trilling knows are not great heroes—evidence the values of the conditioned spirit: Keats' honest pleasure in food and company, his enabling conviction that happiness, as much as tragedy, was a part of the possibility of life and art; Howells' warm, patient sense of the commonplace; the quality of affection and love in Tolstoi; James's comprehension of the biological nature of moral fact; Orwell's simple dignity of truth-telling. All these are artists who compose a tradition opposed to our own exacerbated insistence upon the wounded spirit, our reliance upon "the great modern strategy of being the insulted and injured", and our characteristic risk, that our preoccupation with the lacerated hero confronting the evil which has already dehumanized him may cause us to lose, almost insensibly, whatever we know of the goodness of life. The heart, by becoming all endurance, by having to steel itself so constantly, may lose its oldest skills for coping with its condition. For art, the consequence is the loss of its power to deal fully, totally, with what we are, or, in Mr. Trilling's terms, to lose the potential fullness of the moral life. For culture the cost is the loss of whatever refreshment art can bring to it. Mr. Trilling's solicitude for both art and culture is such that he has here taken the one critical risk that nowadays far outruns the risk of being wrong—the risk of appearing naive or embarrassed.

It is no news that criticism has recently (and happily) had an access of what can only be called humane perception, and Mr. Trilling's book should do much to articulate this event and give it the discussion it needs. Everywhere, of course, this new humanity is carried somewhat self-consciously, with visible anxiety that concern for the goodness of life should not be mistaken for mere optimism or the betrayal of the knowledge of evil, that mellowness should not have as its cost the loss of rigorous intelligence. Mr. Trilling, for instance, despite the sustained dignity of his presentation, seems at times almost embarrassed by what he finds so obvious and compelling ("I do not know", he wonders, "whether or not anyone has remarked the peculiar power the idea of the family has in literature—perhaps it has never been worth anyone's while to remark what is so simple and obvious . . .") He is clearly just a little too impressed with Keats's gustatory pleasure, a little too concerned that we should

not misunderstand him or think he has turned his back on Kafka or deserted the anxiety at Astor Place for the comforts of a farm in Vermont. But these are the trifling insecurities and embarrassments that attend pioneering, and Mr. Trilling's book, for all its honest, anxious simplicity, is anything but a laboring of the obvious; it is, rather, a fine, complex restatement of what criticism and literature are in danger of forgetting. And it brings criticism face to face with the kind of literature that makes articulation both urgent and desperately difficult.

The deeper insecurity which haunts the book is, of course, the fear that our literature of the unconditioned spirit may genuinely speak for our culture; that we may have lost, and not merely forgotten, all those saving skills that Mr. Trilling finds in the nineteenth century. This is not, I think, the mere habitual anxiety of a critic whose self-chosen boundaries are the Hudson and the Housatonic and who has always, by deliberate choice, lived at the nerve-ends of his culture, peculiarly exposed to all the unconditioned wind out of Europe, and it may well be that the values he recommends for the completion of our moral life may have been almost obliterated by the desperate circumstances of our time. If they have been swamped, however, I suspect that they have been swamped less by circumstances than by our devotion to the bad habits of innocence in Mr. Fiedler's sense of the word. The worst of a bad habit like that of unconditioned spirit is, of course, that it denies it is a habit at all; nothing, as Mr. Fiedler says, breeds success these days as failure does, and we know he is speaking of the kind of habit which has poisoned intellectual culture for twenty years at least. In the meantime we have the evidence of Mr. Trilling's book and the lively response to it, and the fatigue of failure which underlies the humanizing of our literature. The change itself is a pleasure, and pleasure, as Mr. Trilling tells us, is an important part of our saving skills.

G. E. DIMOCK, JR.

Robert Graves and Greek Mythology

THE GREEK MYTHS, by *Robert Graves*. Penguin Books, 2 vols. 95c each.

IN THE WORLD OF LETTERS THESE DAYS one can detect a certain thrashing around in search of a substitute for a classical education. The idea seems to be that there ought to be a quick way to tell people who are reading, let us say, Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, who these figures really are and what they stand for. To take another case, when Wallace Stevens, in *Presence of an External Master of Knowledge*, writes

*Under the shape of his sail, Ulysses,
Symbol of the seeker, crossing by night
The giant sea, read his own mind.*

it really does seem helpful for his readers to remember that Homer makes Poseidon, the sea-god, Odysseus' prime adversary. To remember this much, a reader needs only to have read *Tanglewood Tales*, but to get an overtone from "read his own mind" he must know the third line of the *Odyssey* in Greek: its possibilities (for our present purposes) are, "He saw the cities of many men, and knew—recognized—read [the human] mind"; all a translation can very well give us is, "He saw the cities of many men and learned their ways." In short, if one wishes to come to grips with literature based on the classics, there is no substitute for duplicating as far as possible the experience, direct or indirect, of the particular artist: in this case, for knowing the *Odyssey* in Greek; in Shakespeare's case, for having read Ovid in Latin. Yet it is probably true that in such matters translations will help a good deal and retellings, like *Tanglewood Tales*, somewhat. At all events, the editors of the Penguin series have commissioned Robert Graves, no mean mythographer in his own right, to redo the Greek myths. This seemed, no doubt, a good idea at the time, but the result is a little as though they had hired a cabinet-maker to do their plumbing: it is an intricate, fascinating, even beautiful piece of work; but of uncertain usefulness.

In judging the book it will be helpful to make a distinction between Robert Graves, who does the introduction, references and commentary, and his other self, weird, or tanist, who does the actual stories, set in slightly larger type. The latter gentleman might well be the Emperor Claudius, to whose toga Graves is no stranger. At any rate our present mythographer is fond of explanations like:

Now the North Wind, who is also called Boreas, fertilizes; which is why mares often turn their hind-quarters to the wind and breed foals without the aid of a stallion (vol. 1, p. 27).

In fact, although this Claudius seems to know things that cannot be proved to have been known before Graves hypothecated them, these things are not blatantly anachronistic—they sound as though they really were in Hesiod:

Next, the goddess created the seven planetary powers, setting a Titaness and a Titan over each (vol. 1, p. 27).

This sort of thing makes a trap for the unwary and a great botheration for the wary who look up Graves' references. Claudius' statement is supposedly

based on Homer, Hesiod, Aristophanes, Apollonius Rhodius, Apollodorus, Clement of Rome, Proclus, and Stephanus of Byzantium; but once the passages have been assembled it is clear that only Graves himself could find in them what Claudius states. Is the argument for Claudius' conclusion perhaps to be found in Graves' *White Goddess*? As it happens, no. There, there are twelve Titans, standing for months, the companions of the Sacred King. Now Graves certainly may be permitted to change his mind, but should Claudius be so definite about evidence which Graves himself can read in several different ways? Indeed, Claudius might well favor the twelve-Titan theory, for he makes another tacit New Testament parallel:

Finally, having established his worship throughout the world, Dionysus ascended to Heaven, and now sits at the right hand of Zeus as one of the Twelve Great Ones (vol. 1, p. 106).

There is no ancient evidence that Graves cites for "at the right hand of Zeus", and yet it makes a good deal of difference, in this particular case, whether an ancient author actually uses the phrase, or whether it is just "Claudius". All this is, perhaps, forgivable. No one is seriously inconvenienced if Graves wants to connect the Titans with the days of the modern week, so long as he tells the genuine stories about the Titans as well. As for the "Christian" Dionysus, Claudius as a rule avoids the disingenuous Biblical echo.

More serious is the matter of tone. You will not find the Zeus of Aeschylus in Graves. Claudius leaves the impression that the Father of Gods and Men could only seduce Hera by assuming the form of a "bedraggled" cuckoo, that he is powerless without his thunderbolts, and that even with them he fled before the monster Typhon until shamed into facing him by Athene. It is not so much that a lot of this is unsupported, as that the emphasis is wrong. Claudius loses no opportunity to make Zeus look ineffectual and silly. When Hephaestus catches Ares and Aphrodite *in flagrante delicto*, Zeus, according to Claudius, refuses to repay the bride-price to Hephaestus. Poseidon, summoned as witness along with the other gods, is so susceptible to Aphrodite's nakedness that he falls in love with her on the spot. In fact, for Claudius, Aphrodite rather has the best of the whole affair. In Homer, the only source for the tale, she does not come off so well, nor does Poseidon fall in love with her. Rather, he preserves the proprieties—the clear implication is that Ares will pay the damages and that Zeus is not called upon to act. What ails Claudius is clear: he is an unconscious worshipper of the White Goddess, just as Graves is a conscious one, and he can only see the gods as ludicrous pretenders to the power which rightfully belongs to the female. If the goddesses are spiteful and shrewish, this is not so much their own fault as the fault of their unnatural position. It might be said in Claudius' defense that if his tone does not suit

Aeschylus, it does suit Ovid—or Noel Coward. Hear him on the boast that launched a thunderbolt against Anchises:

Some days later, while Anchises was drinking with his companions, one of them asked: "Would you not rather sleep with the daughter of So-and-so than with Aphrodite herself?" "No," he replied unguardedly. "Having slept with both, I find the question inept." (vol. 1, p. 69).

This is some little distance from the *Aeneid* and from the Homeric *Hymn to Aphrodite* alike. It is true enough that those who read Homer or Vergil, even in translation, are not likely to be led astray, but what of those who will take their notion of the Greek myths exclusively from looking up modern references in Graves? Ovid's tone is not the only one, and the point of its irony is largely lost without a concomitant feeling for the essential seriousness of the myths as they are embodied in Classical Greek art and literature, the seriousness, say, of the Zeus who stands today in the foyer of the General Assembly Building of the United Nations.

Claudius, when referred to only for the "facts", becomes useful, but not as useful as he might be. An editor remarked in conversation the other day that his usual source for such things, Gayley's *Classic Myths*, reminded him of a high-school pageant. You certainly cannot find in Gayley, he pointed out, what it is that is so special about Teiresias. Claudius, let it be said at once, is delighted to tell him. Still, I think I would advise him to bill his quarterly for the price of the Oxford Classical Dictionary, and when that fails him, as it sometimes will, to turn to H. J. Rose's *Handbook of Greek Mythology* or Frazer's *Apollodorus* (Loeb edition). Granted that Graves is more fun to read, the OCD is quicker, Frazer has fuller references, and in all three there is a much better chance, without looking up the references, of finding who said what about the mythological matter in question. Besides, the narrative will not be influenced by preconceived notions about the proper relations between the sexes.

But an editor's needs are not everybody's. *The Greek Myths*, as its cover informs us, was "written specially as a companion to the Penguin Classics". When used as such, it is helpful, and there is no doubt that its availability recommends it highly. But there is always the chance that Graves has "restored" something, altered something, or omitted something, for reasons which are usually clear enough, but quite unconnected with the needs of a reader who wants to know what particular story his author is referring to. Athene's shaming the cowardly Zeus into fighting Typhon (vol. 1, p. 134) is an example of restoration; in the story of Lycurgus' persecution of Dionysus (vol. 1, p. 105) Graves has substituted Rhea for Apollodorus' Dionysus as the agent of Lycurgus' punishment—the latter case actually obscures a reference to this myth in Sophocles' *Antigone*—a Penguin Classic; and finally, Graves has

omitted the crucial part of the Orphic myth which explains human nature as a blend of "Titan", or earthly, and divine elements (vol. 1, pp. 103-4 and 118-9; Graves has two versions, considerably reconstructed). This last will, among other things, make incomprehensible Plato's reference in the *Laws* (701c) to the "Titan part of our nature"—but Graves wouldn't touch Plato with a ten-foot pole:

It [sodomy] turned Greek philosophy into an intellectual game that men could play without the assistance of women, now that they had found a new field of homosexual romance. Plato exploited this to the full. . . (vol. 1, p. 117).

Enough has been said to show that it is not primarily the reader of literature whom Graves is trying to serve, at least not the reader of Classical literature. To judge from *The White Goddess* (p. 11) "Classical" poetry is not true poetry—the Classical poet being defined as one who "claims to be the Goddess's master". For Graves the truth of the matter is that the myths found in Greek and Roman literature are in general affected by a vast "Apolline" conspiracy against the true religion, though true poetry's "ancient language survived purely enough in the secret Mystery-cults of Eleusis, Corinth, Samothrace, and elsewhere" (*White Goddess*, p. x). Accordingly, what the poet and student of poetry should look for in the Greek myths is nothing less than a secret doctrine, hidden from the wise and not always revealed to the simple. Behind the myths as we have them Graves can and does find the one true myth for true poets, the myth of the White Goddess.

For Graves, true myth is a "short-hand" account of ritual, to be distinguished from twelve varieties of pseudo-myth. There is no objection to defining myth arbitrarily in this way, but given Graves' preoccupations, the assumption leads to astonishing results. Apparently Graves has found in Sir James Frazer's theories of the Sacred King and his periodic sacrificial death a most potent symbol for his own poetry, and indeed his own existence:

The poet identifies himself with the God of the Waxing Year and his Muse with the Goddess (*White Goddess*, p. 10).

No poet can hope to understand the nature of poetry unless he has had a vision of the Naked King crucified to the lopped oak, and watched the dancers, red-eyed from the acrid smoke of the sacrificial fires, stamping out the measure of the dance, their bodies bent uncouthly forward with a monotonous chant of: "Kill! kill! kill!" and "Blood! blood! blood!" (*Ibid.* p. 373).

Convinced by this symbol, Graves the poet and myth-maker has felt the two characteristic mythic needs: first, to explain everything by his symbol—why

the numbers three and seven are significant, where the days of the week got their names, what is the true order of the letters of the alphabet, why are cats, the number thirteen, and the left hand unlucky; and second, to establish the symbol's historical validity.

The trouble is that when you suspect every death in Greek myth of concealing a rite of human sacrifice, you are in danger of including some unlikely methods of extinction: the king

might be torn in pieces by wild women, transfixed with a sting-ray spear, felled with an axe, pricked in the heel with a poisoned arrow, flung over a cliff, burned to death on a pyre, drowned in a pool, or killed in a pre-arranged chariot crash (vol. 1, p. 19).

But perhaps the most interesting method of sacrifice is connected with the worship of the Mediterranean Bee-goddess:

Aphrodite Urania ('queen of the mountain') or Erycina ('of the heather') was the nymph-goddess of midsummer. She destroyed the sacred king, who mated with her on a mountain top, as a queen-bee destroys the drone: by tearing out his sexual organs (vol. 1, p. 71).

I believe it is true that no modern investigator has ever actually witnessed the mating of the queen-bee, since this takes place in the midst of the swarm in flight. The ancients may have been able to identify the bee's sexual organs, though the widespread impression that the queen was a king seems to tell against this. However, this may have been Apolline propaganda, and in any case it is Graves' belief that our stone-age ancestors knew a good deal more about this sort of thing than we do. This then, for Graves, is what really lies behind Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*.

This short review can give no idea of the tremendous fabric of Graves' own myth of the White Goddess, as it is embodied in the commentary which comprises perhaps a third of this book. It would take literally years to unravel it by conventional scholarly methods, finding the alternative explanation for this, the conclusive evidence against that, the way in which the other is misread. For in all innocence Graves has used his own tremendous talent for making fiction seem like history to present us with a monument of pseudo-scholarship. He has followed the spirit of the times and invented the logical sequel to science-fiction: social-science fiction. For I am afraid that the only sense in which *The Greek Myths* lives up to its editors' claim that it embodies "the conclusions of modern anthropology and archaeology" is that it starts out from some outmoded theories of the anthropologists Frazer and Briffault, and interprets, usually in a way no archaeologist would dare, a number of artifacts which archaeologists have dug up.

What is so bad about this? Nothing, if we are content to take Graves' commentary as a fascinating fiction, or as a help to the understanding of his own poetry, and the poetry of any others whom his theories may convince. But I think we should not let it influence our picture of early European life and thought. We are, of course, tremendously sophisticated these days. We know that no historian, however scholarly, can give us more than a myth of the past—any more than we can say what “really” is going on around us at the present moment. This might lead us to think that it doesn't matter what we believe, if it satisfies us, and that Graves, stout fellow, is to be applauded for venturing where scholars fear to tread and giving us for once a really robust myth. Unfortunately, scholars are married to a method. They have sets of rules, different for their various disciplines. This is their compartmentalization, at which Graves scoffs. Methods have the disadvantage of yielding results only up to a certain point; they have the advantage of commanding agreement so far as they go: apply the same rules to the same evidence and, theoretically at least, any sane man will get the same result. Method is thus a sort of social cement, and that is perhaps why scholars prefer to make their myths by the rules. Graves only *seems* to play by the rules; actually, his evidence can be read in any number of ways. He knows, none better, how to make things sound like scholarship; but he is really a magician, as he and his Goddess would admit. I hope there is an apotropaic charm for the use of readers of the Penguin Classics.

To conclude, it is a little surprising that Graves in his introduction speaks slightly of *Tanglewood Tales*. Since the Greek myths therein embody the sacral tree-sequences of the month and alphabet, and in view of Hawthorne's exposure to the New England witch-cult, the title *Tanglewood Tales* can hardly refer to anything less than a thinly disguised short-hand account of the ritual of the Goddess herself. And for what other reason could the author style himself “Hawthorne”?

From January 2, to February 15, 1956, The Corporation of Yaddo will consider applications from those interested in spring, summer or fall residence. Inquiries from serious and responsible workers in the fields of writing, musical composition, painting and the other arts should be addressed to Mrs. Elizabeth Ames, Executive Director of Yaddo, Saratoga Springs, New York.

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Board of Directors,
THE CORPORATION OF YADDO

HARVEY SWADOS

Some Old Worlds, and Some New Ones, Too¹

IT IS INTERESTING, IF NOT SYMPTOMATIC, that the most alive and moving of the novels under present consideration, ranging from Eastern Europe to the America of the day after tomorrow, should be the product of a man forty years dead, in a tongue that was a literary curiosity in his own culture and is already a dying language, spoken and read today by a shrinking handful.

Sholom Aleichem's fragment of an autobiography is a series of sketches of the mid-nineteenth century ghettos of Little Russia, beginning with the daily adventures of a small boy and ending with his first romance and entrance into the world beyond the ghetto as a County School student. We follow the fortunes of Sholom's father from prosperity as storekeeper and man of affairs to poverty as keeper of a second-class inn; of his mother, from continuous child-bearing to death in a cholera plague; of his stepmother, who, deceived as to the exact number of his brothers and sisters, took revenge with a lexicon of abuse which Sholom copied down secretly as an early literary exercise and has here immortalized; of Uncle Nissel and Auntie Hodel, Uncle Pinney and crippled Grandmother Gittel, and so many other relatives; and of the boy himself, swimming, hunting for buried treasure, stealing a boarder's purse, swiping fruit, playing practical jokes, travelling by horse and wagon and ferry from one village to another, weeping over the death of his faithful dog, mourning the loss of one inseparable pal by disappearance and of another by death, and studying, studying, studying, learning by rote and by ruler, from dawn until dusk in the grimly medieval cheder (*Hebrew school*).

At the risk of making the Mark Twain-Sholom Aleichem comparison once too often, I must point out that *The Great Fair* displays just those qualities which make *Huckleberry Finn* one of the truly great novels. Neither book could possibly have been written by a very young man, and yet the adult sophistication of their comedy does not preclude an all but overwhelmingly vivid immediacy, a sense of life and more-than-life transforming the elegiac past into a universal memory of youth that is neither simply poignant nor simply pathetic because now that it has been captured it can never again be really lost. In its own modest way, therefore, *The Great Fair* is one of the publishing events of the year.

¹THE GREAT FAIR, by *Sholom Aleichem*. Noonday. \$3.75. THE SEIZURE OF POWER, by *Czeslaw Milosz*. Criterion. \$3.50. FLESH AND BLOOD, by *François Mauriac*. Farrar, Straus. \$3.00. BONJOUR TRISTESSE, by *Françoise Sagan*. Dutton. \$2.50. THE BRIDE OF INISHFALLEN, by *Eudora Welty*. Harcourt, Brace. \$3.50. THE RECOGNITIONS, by *William Gaddis*. Harcourt, Brace. \$7.50. FAITHFUL ARE THE WOUNDS, by *May Sarton*. Rinehart. \$3.00.

This reviewer understands just enough Yiddish to regret the necessity of enjoying Sholom Aleichem's inimitable flavor at second hand in Tamara Kahana's English rendering. But here we raise a question more humanly significant than the traditional complaint of loss through translation—after all, millions have enjoyed Mark Twain in their own languages without being able to read him in the original, and so will many others enjoy Sholom Aleichem in translation; but the latter deliberately elected to write in a language that was to be murdered along with five million of those who spoke it. If we are to take its author seriously we must regard *The Great Fair* as one of the monuments to the extraordinary culture of the European ghetto, now as dead as the culture of the Incas and unmourned either by the followers of Sholom Aleichem or by the Hebrew-speaking Israelis who would relegate it to a dusty museum and who cannot abide the very sound of its language. But the Israelis have yet to demonstrate their ability to create a modern language inspiring to new writers or an ambiance from which will emerge such dazzling constellations of talents as those which have lightened the western world for the past century. The contributions of the children of the ghetto in the fields of literature, philosophy, science, painting, and the composition and performance of music, have been so far in excess of their numbers as not only to render Jewish pride perfectly understandable but also to constitute an imperishable chapter in the story of man's struggle against darkness. Students of this extraordinary phenomenon will find it a delightful necessity to read Sholom Aleichem's lovingly evoked revelation of a closed society containing simultaneously an ingrained respect for all tradition and all learning (particularly the most egregiously useless!) and a stormy ambition to breast the walls erected by tradition and by the enemy and to burst into the latter's camp.

The physical world of Sholom Aleichem died in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943. One of the many characters in Czeslaw Milosz's brief, but dense and harrowing novel, *The Seizure of Power*, recalls that "he had been only a spectator. He had stood in a crowd in Krasinski Square while children ran about looking at the German guns. He saw the movements of the barrels when the guns fired, the windows at which a hand appeared, the falling pieces of masonry. 'Oh! They've got him,' the crowd shouted. 'There—look—he's hanging from the window!' The wind carried the smoke from the burning ghetto toward the churches from which people were issuing, wearing their Sunday clothes, chattering, and moving through the fair grounds where girls' dresses fluttered on merry-go-rounds. Old women were saying anxiously: 'They're burning the Jews now. It will be our turn next.'"

Mr. Milosz is an honest and profoundly moral writer, and we shall take his word that this is how it was. (Who can say what the American crowds who urge dangling psychotics to jump from hotel cornices would do if they smelled the ghetto's smoke?) In the summer of 1944, the Russian army, having reached

the very suburbs of Warsaw, suddenly halted even while Radio Moscow was broadcasting appeals to the Polish Underground to rise in revolt. By the time the Russians resumed their offensive, Warsaw was a pile of rubble; buried beneath it lay the bodies of the Polish Nationalists who could otherwise have been such a source of annoyance to the new conquerors.

When the smoke and the "greasy ashes" had settled, Poland was ruled by a handful of Russian-directed Communists whose goal was, as one of them put it to a young Catholic Rightist, "to find people who, while not themselves Marxists, are ready to support the economic reconstruction of the country. As for the rest, you'll play for time. And so will we." *The Seizure of Power* is concerned with all those who played for time in the immediate postwar years—intellectuals who temporized, fled, or went along with the Party; partisans picked off in the woods; middleclass elements who fell like leaves shaken from a tree; and workers who "kept silent about many things in their past and did not disclose their thoughts on the future. They clung to a measurable, visible task—patriots of a desert which for them continued to conceal both a past and a future life." And old Socialists who had words which were only of "bitter disappointment", but might well speak for the author: "Everybody's got to decide according to his own conscience how he must act to preserve some decency. All the reactionaries among the *émigrés* will, of course, appropriate to themselves the monopoly of being 'pure'. . . . No, today everybody must not only make a choice, but also a choice within a choice."

Unfortunately, like most political novelists, Mr. Milosz, who left Poland in 1951, has dissipated his energies on a vast crowd representing all ranks of society, who end by canceling themselves out in the reader's memory. In so doing, even with the aid of Celina Wieniewska's smooth translation, he has added very little to what we had already learned from his *The Captive Mind*, one of the most thoughtful, original and powerful analyses of the fate of the intellectual in a totalitarian state.

From France we receive (in translation) as usual little that is new but much that is entertaining. *Flesh and Blood* is redolent of the old-fashioned and even of the archaic—but it is surely not Mauriac's newest novel, only his most recently translated. A gross but spiritual young farmhand is involved with the over-refined daughter and son of his boss. The daughter settles down into a Catholic marriage after an affair with him; the son goes picturesquely to his doom after an extended religious debate with him. Although it reads very briskly, as does everything of Mauriac's which I have looked at, I find that some little time after putting down Gerard Hopkins's spirited translation, the only thing that sticks in my mind is a phrase of the "weak and indolent" hero's, complaining that his mistress must "plump herself on my knee in that thoughtless way that women have, because they are apparently of the opinion that love makes them light. . ."

There is, as usual, as much grappling with evil in this book as in the novels of Graham Greene. I have suspected for a long time that one reason for both men's inability to attain the first rank (despite Nobel Prizes and accolades from *Life* magazine) is their insistence on wrapping everything in wretchedness, so that in the end neither good nor evil sounds particularly enjoyable. However, while Mr. Greene's glum and careful tales read like imitation novels—one is reminded of those hard-working vaudeville mimics who can persuade you that you are listening to Bing Crosby or Tallulah Bankhead—François Mauriac's dogma cannot succeed in wholly obliterating his Gallic skill as a story teller. This said, I must admit that I can think of almost nothing else to say about *Flesh and Blood*; and since I am rarely at a loss for words, I must ascribe this not to my own obtuseness, but to the fact that M. Mauriac's writing simply does not reverberate, or stimulate one to think after one has put it down.

Much seems to have been made of the fact that Françoise Sagan was eighteen when she wrote *Bonjour Tristesse*: that is, about the age when American college girls are enrolling for their first course in Creative Writing. But since neither literacy nor self-expression during adolescence are regarded as suspect in France, it would seem more to the point to consider what these have accomplished for Mlle. Sagan.

Probably everyone is familiar by now with her story. A seventeen-year old, vacationing on the Côte d'Azur with her wealthy, charming daddy and his sexy mistress, involves her own boy friend and the mistress in a scheme designed to prevent another, serious-minded woman from marrying daddy and becoming a "mother" to her. The plot is so successful that the invader dies, at once dissipating the threat she had posed to the continued lazy intimacy of father and daughter.

True, the Riviera atmosphere is wispily unconvincing; true, the story itself is as preposterous as a fairy tale; nevertheless *Bonjour Tristesse* is enormously readable because it oozes vitality and well-controlled literary power, and even more because it is such an unabashed wish-fulfillment fantasy: one wonders why the author bothered with the conversion of real mother into potential stepmother, dispatched with such delight so that daddy can be enjoyed all alone. . . . Whether a writer whose career commences in this fashion can reasonably be expected to produce better books with increased maturity is highly questionable; but I should be rather surprised if she did not go on to turn out many more novels on at least this limited level of excellence.

(There is space only to mention two other current novels, also by women, and also set on the Côte d'Azur. Célia Bertin's *The Last Innocence* (McGraw-Hill, \$3.75) won the Prix Renaudot, but I found it so feline and so excessively feminine as to be practically unreadable, while Kay Boyle's *The Seagull on the Step* (Knopf, \$3.50) is here noted only because there might be some who would otherwise hope, because of its author's name, that it is superior to cheap lending library fiction. It is not.)

I opened Eudora Welty's new collection of short stories with the wary expectancy of one of her southern villagers opening a can of imported truffles. In a way it was like coming home, after all the novels by European women, for I found that I had myself undergone some of the experiences described in these stories—hitchhiking through the Delta region below New Orleans, riding on a third-class train in Ireland, traveling tourist-class on an Italian steamer to the Mediterranean—and I am happy to testify that Miss Welty's descriptions of scene and incidental personae are accurate, acute, and brilliantly perceptive. Furthermore, when she is at the top of her form, as in the gently humorous "Ladies In Spring", she writes as beautifully as anyone now at work in the United States: "He (a small boy) stood in the light of birdleg-pink leaves, yellow flower vines, and scattered white blooms each crushed under its drop of water as under a stone, the maples red as cinnamon drops and the falling, thready nets of willows, and heard the loneliest sound in creation, an unknown bird singing through the very moment when he was the one that listened to it. Across the Little Muscadine the golden soldier-tassels of distant oaks filled with light, and there the clear sun dropped."

Anyone who can write like that has no need of critics—nor, possibly, do her readers. Yet I must observe that for longer stretches than a paragraph, or perhaps a few pages, Miss Welty is simply not an interesting writer. This is of course heresy, but I can hardly believe myself alone in complaining of a "simplicity" drenched with artistic effects, of stories that are not stories but over-extended travel sketches, of emotions and motivations so delicately expressed as to remain uncommunicated, of conversations recorded at pointlessly infinite length—in short, of the cardinal sin of not knowing when to stop, so that one reader at least winds up by being bored stiff.

William Gaddis is no doubt paying the price for having dared to bore people with a novel which is nearly a thousand pages long. Daring or no, if there were a literary award for prolixity Mr. Gaddis would certainly be in line for the honors. He has however had the foresight to get back at his critics *before* they could get at him. A Poet and a Critic meet, each carrying "quite a thick book", remarkably like *The Recognitions* in format: "—You reading that? both asked at once . . . —No, I'm just reviewing it . . . A lousy twenty-five bucks. It'll take me the whole evening . . . —Reading it? Christ no, what do you think I am? I just been having trouble sleeping, so my analyst told me to get a book and count the letters. . . ."

Obviously, Mr. Gaddis is angry at fakery—religious, literary, artistic; indeed one is inclined to suspect that he regards all of western culture (which he has apparently made an enormous effort to assimilate) as one huge fraud. He has mounted his attack against it with an oddly-assorted battery of weapons: an army of the snazziest grotesques this side of the *Inferno*, a plot which is by

turns hilarious, labyrinthine, and stupefying, a barrage of gags, puns, jokes, and limericks from the conversational armory of intellectuals, tourists, drunks and other counterfeit human beings from Mr. Gaddis's menagerie, and a hail of erudition poured like boiling oil on the defenseless heads not of his enemies but of his readers (or does he intend an identity?).

It is precisely this last question which makes us uneasy: is it just the *others* whom he is assaulting, or is he after *us* too? The phoney editor of a phoney literary magazine is a figure of fun, misplacing his testosterone pills and his contraceptives, and finally trapping himself in the john of a Swiss-bound train where he has stuffed his suit down the toilet only to find that his new one, when removed from the tailor's box, is a sailor suit made for a boy of seven. . . . The tourists too are fun, butchering Spanish and murdering French, but as we press on through Mr. Gaddis's heavy artillery fire (I counted eight different languages *en route*, and there may well have been more) we begin to suspect that his contempt may extend to all those who know less than he. It is necessarily intensified when we meet the phoney distinguished novelist holed up in a Spanish monastery, gathering material for a quickie on religion and the simple life, with his "book of quotations, which stood him in the stead of a classical education". This kind of fun verges on the mean (who nowadays *does* have a classical education?) and exposes the book's biggest weakness.

Mr. Gaddis has fallen victim to his own erudition. Unable to resist the temptation to prove that he is as familiar with ecclesiastical history as a professor at a theological seminary, as at home in many languages, including the Hungarian, as the dean of a Berlitz School, as conversant with graphic art as a museum director, he has strangely forgotten that erudition isn't even necessary for the creation of good and true fiction: if it were, Dostoevsky would be one of the worst of novelists, and Robert Briffault one of the best.

Nevertheless, Mr. Gaddis does have more than erudition. He has wit and gaiety and a tricky gift for grotesquerie, and if these are almost bafflingly mixed with self-indulgent verbosity, deadly unfunny repetitiveness, and endless portentous gasping conversations which read as though the author had his thumb on the windpipe of each speaker, there is enough besides to mark him as a writer of distinction and power. I look forward with eager curiosity to see what he does next.

The operative word in the title of Miss Sarton's beautifully controlled novel is "wounds": she would have us consider the agony of the liberal as it finds its expression in the life and death of a Harvard literary critic remarkably like the late F. O. Matthiessen. Actually, she is more interested in the people around the tormented and lonely Edward Cavan, in his comfortable Republican sister, in his apolitical colleague-rival Ivan Goldberg (a brilliantly-drawn figure), in his pro- and anti-communist liberal friends, than she is in the immediate im-

pulses that drove Cavan to commit suicide; and this is all to the good, for an exclusive absorption with the inner torments of Cavan would have required a much more exhaustive treatment of his personal sexual problems (hardly germane to the problems of American liberalism), and a consequent scanting of his friends, who provide us in the end with an admirable gallery of sympathetic intellectuals.

There are moments at the beginning of this tense and exciting story when one feels that Miss Sarton is going to attempt nothing more than a job of political axe-grinding, but she is too much the novelist to dissipate her energies on flaying either anti-communists or anti-anti-communists. Unfortunately however she has committed a major blunder at the close of the book that tends to reopen the question: a physics professor friend of Cavan's testifies before an Investigating Committee that he had contributed to the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee in October 1941 despite its public listing by the Attorney-General as subversive. To the best of my memory there was no such ugly thing as an Attorney-General's listing in 1941, and we may therefore assume that Miss Sarton meant the decisive year to be 1951; but the professor's contribution to a fund-funneling Communist front, which could perhaps have been interpreted as late as 1941 as an act of simple generosity but not necessarily a courageous one, would have to be regarded in 1951 as the gesture of an utter fool or a conscious Communist. In either case the admiration which the author invites us to feel for the late Edward Cavan's loyal friend inevitably becomes somewhat blunted.

But despite one's uneasiness before the entrenched stupidity of most of Miss Sarton's people in regarding the Communists as a legitimate part of their liberal left (when I was an undergraduate, not at Harvard, one of our local heroines was an old anarchist lady who, while just as uncompromising and idealistic as Miss Sarton's aged Grace Kimlock, had in addition the good sense to mistrust and despise the Communists), there can be no question but that her sympathy for everyone, stupid and wise, temporizing and brave, succeeds not only in transcending passing political questions but also in creating the most real characters to people a "political" novel in a long time. I cannot think of any other recent book which treats with such sensitivity and understanding—and at the same time with such a sense of excitement and of the genuine moral importance of engaged intellectuals and university people—some of the most tormenting problems of a tormented age.

JOHN THOMPSON

Moving in on Shakespeare¹

DEREK TRAVERSI'S *Shakespeare: The Last Phase* is an extension of an earlier book, *Approach to Shakespeare*, which was published in England in 1938 but has never come out in America. I should like to comment on it before taking up the newer work. *Approach to Shakespeare* is a perfect little book. It sets out to examine Shakespeare as T. S. Eliot suggested that it must be done: "The full meaning of any one of his plays is not in itself alone, but in that play in the order in which it was written, in its relation to all of Shakespeare's other plays, earlier and later: we must know all of Shakespeare's work in order to know any of it." For his guide to meaning, Traversi takes the language of the plays, in verse texture, in images, in images that become symbols, and in the relation of those things to what we call other elements of the plays: the plot, the character, the "subject". This is an ambitious project but the book is personally modest, makes no large attempt to enlist Shakespeare in the cause of an abstract system of thought, and yet insists always on the greatest possible intention in the plays at every point. Within his own selected limits, in the 150 small pages of this book, Traversi is wholly successful. He knows what needs to be known from the scholars and critics (he is full of G. Wilson Knight, as he should be), but the results are his own. These are the perfect notes of anyone's ideal, imaginary lecturer on Shakespeare, who can work with the most minute detail, one word at a time, when he wants to, as well as with brave generalities. In the end, he has suggested nearly everything and leaves us to go on for ourselves with that one long poem which is all of Shakespeare's works.

Traversi shows us how in the last scenes of *Lear* the language is working differently than it has before, doing more than reflecting the action. It is raised to the power of symbolism and controls all the parts of the play. Plot and character in the ordinary sense are subservient to it. The reconciliation of opposing themes has begun, storm and calm, blood and reason, birth and death, court and forest, old age and youth; and "music" has become a decisive theme. It is this stage that Traversi's new work takes up.

After the earlier book, *Shakespeare: The Last Phase* is a disappointment. It is what seemingly was wanted: that he go on talking in that wonderful way, but more slowly and patiently and with much more explaining, qualifying and defining. He has done that, but in doing it he has shown that sometimes what seemed in the little book clues to develop were in fact good places to stop. I do not mean that there are not treasures here, for there are. There is a brilliant

¹SHAKESPEARE: THE LAST PHASE, by *Derek Traversi*. Harcourt, Brace. \$4.75. THE SHAKESPEAREAN MOMENT, by *Patrick Cruttwell*. Columbia. \$3.75.

analysis of the pastoral and court traditions, there are connections made in the verse and themes of *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*; the essay on *The Tempest* seems to me almost entirely successful in demonstrating through the examination of the language the way the themes of the earlier plays are drawn together in the great reconciliation.

But in this book I think Traversi has not avoided the peril of interpreters, perhaps the inevitable one for interpreters of any courage. He pursues one of his own truths until he is out of sight. If this interpreter is lost, with all his own warnings, who will not be? But it was really at an intermediate point that something went wrong. In *Approach to Shakespeare* he was content to say, and we had to be content with hearing: "I have attempted by analysis to bring out the advance in Shakespeare's experience represented by *Othello*." This is shorthand, of course, and the author should not be expected to stop and work up a theory of art about "represented"; but "experience" could stand for almost anything, and in that book it had to. In *The Last Phase* it turns out that it stands for "moral" experience. "The moral sphere", "moral growth", "moral integrity", "moral basis", "moral realities", "moral re-birth", "moral harmony", "moral content", "moral being", "moral insight", "moral choice", "moral experience"; it is the key term of the book and the reason for its failures.

For one thing, Traversi is extravagantly repetitious here, as he was succinct before. He repeats again and again the idea that requires him to use the word "moral" so much. This is that reconciliation takes place, in each play, "on a moral basis enriched by subjection to suffering". Yet it is also, this reconciliation, these restorations from the dead, the action of divine grace. In trying to prove this, in every case, Traversi insists and is unenlightening. What seems true of *The Tempest* will not work for the other plays. How this idea leads him astray, away from the center of the plays and into a jungle of metaphors which purport to explain one another, can be seen here, in his comments on that moment in *The Winter's Tale* when Leontes suddenly realizes, upon the death of his son, that he was wrong in suspecting Hermione and Polixenes of adultery.

*Apollo's angry; and the heavens themselves
Do strike at my injustice.*

This, like the rest of the scene, in which Paulina brings news of Hermione's supposed 'death,' is scarcely convincing in any realistic sense. In this play, however, the movement of the fable, the relationship of its various stages in the unfolding of an organic whole, has a value of its own, not to be measured in terms of external credibility; it is as the framework of a balanced conception, to which subsistent life is given by the operation of the poetic intensities, that we are to see it. Judged in this way, the words just quoted represent the birth of Leontes' repentance. . . .

Somewhere Traversi has lost the point towards which he seemed headed in *Approach to Shakespeare*. Instead of finding the coherence of the plays in the language, in its extended power in image and symbol, he has found it in an idea. True, it is not the physical plausibility, the realistic cause-and-effect, which ought to be at question in these plays. But neither is it the moral cause-and-effect. The implausibility of that, like the physical implausibility, should show that attention will have to be turned elsewhere if we hope to find coherence. It is exactly in the language and its function in image and symbol, in what Traversi began to investigate, that the coherence might be found. But his insistence on a "balanced conception" which is moral, to which poetry only gives "subsistent life", prevents him from pushing the search far enough in that direction.

Shakespeare begins in *Pericles* to say that the suffering of loss brings the reward of reconciliation, and in this and the other plays he shows the two in those marvelous condensations at every level:

*Did you not name a tempest,
A birth, and death?*

But not until he writes *The Tempest* does he show, in anything like moral terms, how suffering brings that reconciliation. Death and birth occur together in the storms, and the new life, Perdita, Marina, eventually becomes reconciled with the old; but there is no cause and effect. It is wonderful coincidence. The coherence of the images and symbols remains a mystery to the moral interpreter. At that level, it is "grace", gratuitous or nothing. And if grace, why the suffering? Because it is doctrine or because in *Cymbeline* Jupiter says so, we could answer.

*Whom best I love, I cross; to make my gift,
The more delay'd, delighted.*

But it is not with this that the poetry is concerned. *The Tempest* is different. For Prospero deliberately raises the storm; he employs Caliban, and puts Ferdinand to the same hauling of logs. Pericles, Posthumous, Leontes, have not done that; they only suffered. When Ariel's speech announces

*I and my fellows
Are ministers of fate,*

it would be hard to believe that Shakespeare meant it only as Ariel speaking in character; "perhaps for the first time in his work," as Traversi says, "the voice of Destiny delivers itself directly in judgement." But it may be delivered for the first time because for the first time it is not necessary. It has been seen

how fathers and children can lend power to one another in more than magnificent coincidences.

The Winter's Tale is a great play and morally it makes no sense. The heart-breaking beauty of the reconciliation is that of fantasies come true; it is not true "morally". But *The Tempest* is the vision of a possibility.

Patrick Cruttwell comes at Shakespeare from quite another angle. He studies him in relation to his age, and the age in relation to Shakespeare. He begins with the sonnets, and traces in them the movement from the conventional, sweet and smooth, to the new, dramatic and complex. This is the beginning of "the Shakespearean moment" in English poetry and in English society, a period when great oppositions were held in tension. It is examined in Donne, in the *Anniversaries* and Shakespeare's late plays, in the lives of some of the great aristocrats, and its dissolution is traced through the Puritan movement, studied in Lord Herbert of Cherbury, the Civil War, and the aftermath. The center is the Jacobean theater.

What Cruttwell does is to strike a clear line through this, dividing all that contributed to, or was analogous to, the qualities he finds in Shakespeare's works from all that operated against these qualities. It is obviously a very useful line to him; it allows him to gather together and analyze a vast range of exhibits. His comparison of Donne's *Anniversaries* and Shakespeare's last plays may seem extremely unlikely, but he turns up many good things in the process. At the same time that his theory is useful to him, it betrays him, too, as he knows it will, into over-simplifying. At many points his reader may wish that he had felt free to follow his energy and taste and dispense with the theory.

What he does with the earliest period, his study of Shakespeare's poetry and its developing techniques and themes and their relation to English poetry as Shakespeare found it, and as it developed alongside him—all this cries out for more. Cruttwell shows some ways this can be done, and some ways it ought not to be done. He begins to do it, with a comparison of Shakespeare's sonnets and Donne's Satires, and the many sonnet sequences and satires of the 1590's. But he is caught up at once in the bigger things of society and the literary analysis is never made deeply enough. The view of the verse of the 1590's is drastically over-simplified. The sonneteers, he says, "aimed at a one-level audience and a one-level acceptance":

There is, in fact, only one way in which a Spenserian or Sidneyan sonnet can be 'taken'; if not in that way, it is not taken at all. Thus the multiple personality of the dramatist reflected (both caused, and was caused by) the nature of the public he wrote for; thus Shakespeare's complaint that his nature had been 'stained' by his breadwinning at the play-house was true in a way which perhaps he did not know: in his raid on the world of politeness and 'gentility' and essential simplicity,

he took over with him—he could not help it—the complex ironies of the professional dramatist.

Leaving aside that theory of the influence of the different audiences, and the question of what Shakespeare did or did not know or couldn't help, there is another difficulty right at the beginning. It will not do to say "Sidney and Spenser", as people used to say "Wyatt and Surrey". Everything was not quite as "simple-minded" as Cruttwell would have it, nothing but "uncritical adoration and mellifluous simplicity". The relations between the verse of the dramatists or of Donne and the verse of the sonnet-writers amount to more than Cruttwell says. Shakespeare and Donne did not have to invent so completely the devices of the dramatic effect. Sidney is not Donne or Shakespeare, but he is not all "smoothness and standardization, abstractness and unreality, utter lack of criticism or analysis". His way of using language is recognizably related to this, for instance of Donne's:

*Rebell and Atheist too, why murmur I,
As though I felt the worst that love could doe?
Love might make me leave loving, or might trie
A deeper plague, to make her love mee too. . . .*

If we note the usual things in Donne, as Cruttwell has noted them—argument against the self reflected in syntax and rhythm, with the sentence running over the line-end to produce an effect of hesitation and surprising resolution like the change of a mood, the metrical pattern used to gain an unusual degree of emphasis and crowding in the line, as in

Love might make me leave loving, or might trie

where the prose stresses, the alliteration, and the metrical pattern combine to bring emphasis to nearly every syllable, giving the line its peculiar energy—we must recognize these things in Sidney, too.

*It is most true that eyes are form'd to serve
The inward light, and that the heavenly part
Ought to be King, from whose rules who do swerve,
Rebels to nature, strive for their owne smart.
It is most true, what we call Cupid's dart
An image is, which for ourselves we carve,
And, fooles, adore in temple of our hart,
Till that good god make church and churchmen starve.*

Donne's degree of cynicism and complexity is not here, but what is essential

is. The argument is conducted in a way we can only call "metaphysical", through contradictions united in an image and in a line whose construction demonstrates the tension of the opposition.

Till that good god make church and churchmen starve is not "mellifluous simplicity"; what I said of Donne's line above is, in this case, even more true of Sidney's. There is both "physical sensation and intellectual analysis" put "in fusion" here by literary techniques. These techniques were there in Sidney's poetry, waiting for extension and greater employment when Donne and Shakespeare appeared. The same is true of Greville, with iron in it.

THOMAS BARBOUR

The Enigma of *Twelfth Night*

THE FIRST NIGHT OF TWELFTH NIGHT, by *Leslie Hotson*. Macmillan. \$4.50.

ONE KIND OF SCHOLAR IS CONTENT TO DREDGE UP a bit of information about his favorite subject, whether from a neglected archive or some forsaken trunk, and let it go at that. The discovery itself exhausts his interest; its consequences are, apparently, not his affair. For him, new facts are not allowed to challenge old conceptions. The doughty Dr. Hotson is not of this mold. A Sherlock Holmes—*cum*-knight errant in the realm of Shakespeareana, he has already (in *Shakespeare's Sonnets Dated*, *Shakespeare's Motley*, etc.) proved his unwillingness to let sleeping traditions lie; and here he is again blithely toppling accepted doctrine simply because he will make what he believes are logical deductions from the information that has come to his attention. Indeed, he pursues his investigation with such zest and obvious relish that his crustier colleagues might even suspect that he is as much concerned with being startling as with being right.

What Dr. Hotson has set out to do in *The First Night of Twelfth Night* is to reconstruct the original performance of the play with the intention of satisfying Quiller-Couch's prescription (which he quotes) that "we can immensely increase our delight in Shakespeare . . . if we keep asking how the thing was done". The primary evidence he has to go on has been available for some time, though apparently no one has cared much to look at it closely. It is known that one Virginio Ursino, Duke of Bracciano, visited the court of the first Elizabeth during the Christmas season of 1600 and that Shakespeare's company was commanded, on eleven days' notice, to prepare an entertainment for the duke to be given on Twelfth Night (January 6), 1600/01. Furthermore, in

the absence of full and indisputable documentary evidence, it has long been supposed that *Twelfth Night* was composed within a year of the time of Bracciano's visit. Certainly the title of the play and the fact that its hero's name is a variant of the duke's surname seem to imply that this was the piece produced for that festive occasion; and such is Dr. Hotson's conclusion. His evidence is, of course, only circumstantial: in all the wealth of pertinent documents he is able to offer, there is, alas, no reference to the play by name nor any description of it beyond that it was a comedy with dances and music. And yet his surmise seems fairer than any other.

Taking it from there, and given some knowledge of the plan of the old palace at Whitehall, he proceeds to describe the performance. It was done, he says, in what we should call "arena style", and his arguments to support this contention are persuasive indeed. He goes a step further to suggest that such was the customary way of producing all plays of the period, even in the commercial theatres of Southwark. Here he throws a dart at the long-accepted hypothesis of the three-sided apron stage, backed by an enclosed playing space under a gallery, which also served as an acting area. The devotees of the "inner-below" and "inner-above" will probably not be wholeheartedly convinced by Dr. Hotson's objections to their theory. If it is true that their evidence in its support is no more secure than his in opposition, there still seems to be an important practical consideration that Dr. Hotson has dealt with somewhat casually. Arena staging, as he readily admits, allows for only the most limited use of scenery. The little that he suggests was required for *Twelfth Night* might conceivably have been accommodated to the Whitehall arena stage, especially since the problem of sight-lines might have been overlooked in this instance as long as the Queen and her guest had an unobstructed view of the action. It might even have been managed in a regular theatre. But I should like to have, however, Dr. Hotson's notes for an "in-the-round" production of, say, *Romeo and Juliet*, where the clear indication of the use of different acting levels suggests some difficulties for him if he expects a substantial part of his audience to see his play. He might throw in my face the designs for most continental horse-shoe theatres (or our own Metropolitan Opera) and ask if a clear view of the stage has always been so absorbing a concern to theatre managers. I should take a coward's refuge in the observation that I am not prepared to refute his theory, but only ask that he consider more carefully its theatrical implications.

When it comes to examining the text of *Twelfth Night*, it is very much to Dr. Hotson's credit that he refuses to believe Shakespeare ever wrote a meaningless line; that Sir Toby's oaths or Feste's exclamations, for example, are merely funny noises; or that their malapropisms and corrupted foreign phrases do not imply correct expressions quite sensible in context. Moreover, he correctly insists that Shakespeare was always not only meaningful, but precise.

Even if he be occasionally over-diligent in his pursuit of sense in every drunken imprecation, his strictly disciplined approach to the problems of textual analysis should serve as a corrective model to careless actors and directors. There are too many of these involved in Shakespearean productions nowadays, who speak or tolerate gibberish on the stage simply because they are too lazy to discover that it isn't gibberish at all. I am sufficiently an academic heretic to believe that, where the surgery can be artfully managed, a jest that depends solely upon some obsolete reference might well be cut from a modern "acting version" of any classic; and yet much can be salvaged if the actor delivering the obscure line will have possessed himself fully of its significance. For it is demonstrably true that at least some of the meaning then will "rub off" on even the most untutored audience. Dr. Hotson's elucidations can be very helpful here. I am especially grateful to him for rescuing the clown's final song, which has too often been taken either for a nonsense jingle or the legacy of an incompetent proof-reader.

I do not find, however, that his interpretations are in every case a service; if he has shed light in the obscure corners of *Twelfth Night*, he has also disconcertingly managed to complicate some of its evident simplicities. To grasp the play fully involves, of course, an understanding of its many topical references; and, since Dr. Hotson knows (or thinks he knows) the exact circumstances of its original production, he seems to have found an excellent point to start from. It is disturbing, though, that he appears too often to look at the occasion before he looks at the play. In other words, his thinking seems frequently to run something like this: we know that a Russian emissary was at the time at Elizabeth's court, although he did not attend the play; we know from contemporary references as well as from his own report to his Czar what sort of fellow he was and that his English hosts must have found him rather comical (and also, clearly, not very different from more recent official visitors from his country); Shakespeare must have lampooned him somewhere in *Twelfth Night*. Question: where? Answer: in Viola-Cesario's response to Olivia, "I can say little more than I have studied, and that question's out of my part." The gloss may be correct, but it doesn't strike me as particularly helpful; in fact it will be positively harmful if it encourages any actress to play the moujik and deliver the line with a Slavic accent. The point is that the words have more significance in relation to Viola's character and the situation at that moment in the play than they ever had or will have to a putative Russian in the adjoining room.

Dr. Hotson's disposition to overlook the play itself leads to more curious fancies than this. For example, to find evidence in Fabian's quip, "If this were play'd upon a stage now, I should condemn it as an improbable fiction," that *Twelfth Night* was presented on the floor of the Great Hall is to fail to notice that the comedy of the line depends upon the play's actually being given on a

stage or, at least, on something that passed for a stage. Again, the apparently awkward construction of Act II, scene 4, with its long delay between the announcement of Feste's song and his singing of it, is explained away in terms of the problem of arena staging; but a readier explanation might be found if Dr. Hotson read the scene very carefully and asked himself how else it might have been written to let Orsino comment upon the song without conflicting with the singer.

The most unfortunate casualty of his method is Sir Andrew Aguecheek. Evidently we are supposed to believe that Shakespeare ignored nothing that might have interested his courtly audience while he filled up *Twelfth Night* with veiled or direct topical references; and, since the strained relations between England and Spain so much preoccupied the minds of his spectators, certainly the play could not be complete without some joke in it about the Spaniards. Dr. Hotson finds the name of Aguecheek inconsistent with his declaration, "I am a great eater of beef," and, pondering upon this seeming discrepancy, he discovers his Spanish joke in Sir Andrew. For Aguecheek is not ague-cheek, but Agu-chica, i.e., *agucia chica* or *agudeza chica*, or "Little-wit"; and Agueface is really *Agua-fáce*, as we should have guessed from Sir Toby's remark about making water in a "sink-a-pace". Now this sort of reasoning (and I have noted here but a few points in the whole of his engaging argument) is all very clever, but, if I might be allowed a bit of word-play myself, it simply doesn't hold water. To see in Aguecheek anything of the *commedia dell' arte* Spanish Captain, which seems to be what Dr. Hotson wants to make him, is, I am sure, a grievous error and one that he would have avoided if he had read *Twelfth Night* as a play rather than a riddle. The lines are not primarily clues, but components of a total theatrical experience, which seems to me only diminished by turning Sir Andrew into Scaramouche. True, there is nothing more explicit than his name to suggest he is, as he is usually played, delicate and scrawny. But why not take the name for what seems its obvious implication? The law of simplicity in logic proposes that Aguecheek means, first of all, ague-cheek; and, if the connotation of "Little-wit" is there too, it cannot cancel out the primary meaning. Though Elizabeth and her court may have been fully conversant with the Spanish tongue, they were more fluent still in their own; and they must have been struck first by the English sense of Sir Andrew's name. They would have been even less inclined to find a Spanish pun in Agueface, which would be apparent perhaps if they read the word, but not so when they heard it, as they did, pronounced upon the stage.

If Shakespeare had wanted to make Aguecheek a Spaniard, would he not have been as explicit as when he created Don Armado in *Love's Labor's Lost*? He designated Sir Andrew, of course, an Illyrian; but, like Sir Toby, he is an Illyrian only in the same sense that Bottom was a Greek. I do not know if eating beef would have given him the ague, nor am I any more certain it would

have made him especially "beefy"¹; but his diet marks him in my mind as an Englishman, and I believe his contemporaries would have been aware of the same connotations. Furthermore, his complete lack of poise, his bafflement at the simplest foreign expression ("What is pourquoi?"), and his bashfulness in the presence of the fair sex, all imply that he is a home-grown product and very much a provincial at that.

We must consider what happens to the play if he is taken otherwise and transformed into a bull-headed swaggerer, however innately cowardly. This is to destroy, for one thing, the nice contrast between Sir Andrew and Sir Toby Belch, a tried-and-true comic pattern which persists in combinations like Laurel and Hardy; and the important relationship between the two knights is thrown all out of kilter. Dr. Hotson would have us believe that, when Sir Toby praises the constitution of his companion's leg, he should be taken literally; but the humor of his remark lies in its absurdity, and, when the absurdity is no longer apparent, the jest is lost. Moreover, Sir Toby's dominion over his friend is supported by just this sort of outrageous flattery, and his hold over Sir Andrew is weakened to the extent that his compliments are made to seem sincere. It is weakened further when, as Dr. Hotson would have it, the initiative for the duel with Viola is transferred substantially to Sir Andrew; the whole point of this episode, it seems to me, is that Sir Toby is (with Fabian's support) its prime architect and manipulator, while the timid and despairing Aguecheek is fully prepared to give up his pursuit of Olivia and to "go home tomorrow". One of the most delightful conceptions of *Twelfth Night* is the irony of Sir Toby's feeding heartily upon his own parasite. The Hotson version of Sir Andrew does not repudiate this conceit, but it seriously impairs its theatrical effectiveness; the only usefulness I can see in the interpretation is that it may discourage the playing of Aguecheek for effeminacy, a characteristic that actors persist with no justification in discovering in the role.

I labor this example only because it betrays a signal deficiency in an otherwise immensely interesting and valuable book. Dr. Hotson has run afoul of the fallacy of taking the trees for the forest; he searches for meanings *in* the play with frequent success, but the meaning *of* the play seems to have escaped him. There are enough "appreciations" of *Twelfth Night*, good, bad, or indifferent, and I do not ask for another one here; but I think we have a right to expect from the author some premise of what the play is all about. This I cannot find. To Dr. Hotson it seems nothing more than an amusing and lyrical comedy. It is that, to be sure; but is it not also a play about people and acutely observed personal and social relationships? If the heart of *Twelfth Night* is really only a topical, and often cryptic, joke, it is some wonder that it has kept beating for so long.

¹Apparently the knight was correct in his diagnosis that it "does harm to my wit". A London physician (reported in *Time*, August 5, 1955) has noted the probable adverse effect upon Sir Andrew's mind of a protein diet in conjunction with a drunkard's cirrhotic liver.

WILLIAM MEREDITH

Five Views of the Inscrutable Empire'

THE FIVE BOOKS TO BE REVIEWED HERE ALL TREAT, in some measure, with Japanese responses to western culture, responses which have for a long time seemed to the Japanese to be crucial ones for their society. But these books, and the rest of a large post-war literature on the subject in English, testify also to a new and remarkable American response to Japanese culture.

The surface causes for our present interest in Japan are numerous but probably insufficient to explain it. Some broad cultural affinity or attraction must have existed before our occupation forces 'discovered' Japan, and before the travelling art treasures, the kabuki dancers, or the three brilliant post-war Japanese films awakened the enthusiasm at home.

An element of our concern is almost certainly guilt. More and more Americans, in the past decade, have come to share with the rest of the world an awe at the responsibility for the second, if not for both, atomic explosions, and our guilt may have made us peculiarly responsive to the nation from which, in a real sense, we contracted it. Another, and I believe stronger, attraction is to an integrity of culture which we see in Japan but no longer in western civilization. For all the physical and spiritual devastation of the war, and the erosions of a centuries-old culture conflict with the west, Japan still presents to western eyes the infinitely desirable appearance of a land of cultural order, albeit in grave decline. Western eyes may be deceived in this vision, but the attraction is there, and it seems to be more widespread in its appeal than the exoticism of Japan which allured our grandparents' generation. It is a little like our present attraction to the 18th century. Certainly these are hopeless passions if we think of them as a desire to *be* 18th century men and women, or to *be* Japanese. But it is sometimes comfortable and useful just to associate with a congenial culture, not in a spirit of make-believe but rather to draw on it for ideas which may somehow apply to our own. Donald Keene, in speaking of the fantasies about Europe that prevailed in Japan before its opening to the west, says something that partly describes our own romantic address to Japan: "The purpose of such fanciful accounts was . . . to call attention to deficiencies at home by praising the superior ways of little-known foreigners".

Our accounts of Japan are bound to be fanciful, because our curiosity

¹JAPANESE LITERATURE, by Donald Keene. Grove Press. \$1.00 and \$2.50. JAPANESE DISCOVERY OF EUROPE, by Donald Keene. Grove Press. \$4.50. DAUGHTERS OF CHANGING JAPAN, by Earl Herbert Cressy. Farrar, Straus and Cudahy. \$4.00. SOME PREFER NETTLES, by Junichiro Tanizaki. Knopf. \$3.00. HOMECOMING, by Jiro Osaragi. Knopf. \$3.75.

about Japan, like hers about the west, is something less than objective. Our questions are shaped by what we think we want to learn. We are sometimes guilty of willful misunderstanding. But this is an innocent error compared to willful understanding, the dogged determination to find a part-for-part correspondence between one's own experience and another's. Unfortunately a good deal of our post-war study of Japan has been conducted in this spirit, as have most Japanese studies of the west from the beginning. We must feel that our fault here is the graver, however, since logic and objective enquiry are basic virtues of our culture and not of theirs.

It is one of the shortcomings of Americans, if not indeed of human beings, that however profoundly we believe in tolerance, we cannot extend it toward anyone until we feel we understand them. Our hell-for-leather urge to *understand* Japan, in this limited definition, relates to another basic western trait, the need to do good. Recognizing the historical necessity for an understanding between ourselves and the orient, do-gooders have arisen in the field who will apparently settle for any sort of understanding.

James Michener is a case in point. *Sayonara* is a work of propaganda in which the very considerable knowledge of Japan he demonstrated in his book on Japanese prints, and the understanding of human complexity he suggested in *Tales of the South Pacific*, are reduced to devices in black and white and gray. Mr. Michener is obviously proud of his gray—the mixture of good and evil, enlightenment and stupidity, with which he endows his favorite characters—but in the end *Sayonara* (like *The Bridges at Toko-Ri*) is simply not true: it has been caricatured to the point where neither the human nor the cultural problems have any meaning. Attributing to him the best of motives, we must still say that this book fails to do good. The Japanese are not like that, Americans are not like that, the problem is not like that; and these powerful sentimental mis-statements can only make it harder for us to recognize and accept the complex differences between the Japanese and ourselves, which is the way to understanding. Yet Pearl Buck, impelled by a similar urge to do good, writes of Mr. Michener's tawdry and pretentious tale: "But deeper than this, if one cares to go deeper [into *Sayonara*], is the authentic explanation of why, if we Americans do not change, we can never win Asia".

Mrs. Buck and Mr. Michener are thus in cahoots, one feels, like a pair of Victorian parents, to break the news about Asia to us gently. The pretty fictions they give us will not serve us well when we get out in the world. The five present volumes are all more honest than this, and if they oversimplify in places it is an honest mistake, not a patronizing device.

Donald Keene is a young scholar of Japanese literature who first attracted attention with a brilliant translation of one of Japan's most famous plays, Chikamatsu's 17th century puppet drama (now played in the kabuki theater as well), *The Battles of Coxinga*. His two present volumes are both more superficial in intent than that fully-annotated text, but on their own terms

are valuable introductory works. *Japanese Literature* is perhaps as slight a book as could bear that title, being a collection of five brief lectures which carry one of the stigmas of a teaching lecture in print, unnecessary repetition. Mr. Keene has been congratulated for his analogies between Japanese culture and our own. At their best, these are perceptive and glancing comparisons, like that he makes between *The Tale of Genji* and Proust. At worst they suggest academic name-dropping. I do not feel they are one of Mr. Keene's real strengths, because a critic as observant as he is, and as evidently well-equipped to discuss Japanese literature in its own terms, does better when he directs all our attention to the object itself. *Japanese Literature* is beginner's text. It has some of the charm of the late Langdon Warner's beautiful and equally unsubstantial introduction to Japanese art, *The Enduring Art of Japan*.

Mr. Keene gives himself more scope in *Japanese Discovery of Europe*, where he presents a fascinating narrative of the first concerted Japanese attempt, in the late 18th century, to understand the west. This was a marvelously willful undertaking, fraught with humor and beheadings, but marking a progress from the belief "that when Dutchmen urinate they lift one leg like dogs" to a "science of latitudes and longitudes" devised by Honda Tashiaki (1744-1821), the hero of the book, to "predict exactly the climate of a place merely by knowing its latitude". This represents, of course, enormous progress in the process of enquiry by which the two errors were arrived at. Mr. Keene's plot concerns adventures of the mind, and it is his thesis that during the period the book covers (1720-1798) there was a change in Japanese *thinking* as great as that following Perry's arrival. The final 70 pages of the book are devoted to a translation by the author of two of Honda's 'scientific' works. The translator has excised these a little high-handedly, and throughout the book there are places where one would have preferred quotations to the efficient paraphrase. The passages that Mr. Keene has given us in translation are the highlights of the book.

Daughters of Changing Japan, by Earl Herbert Cressy, is an informal sociological study of a group of young women in post-war Japan. The information presented by the young women themselves (and apparently in English) has been woven into a series of loosely related narratives, and is filled with remarkable glimpses into two little-known worlds, Japan and adolescence. Mr. Cressy dwells at length on certain of the girls' experiences, like a school-girl's crush, with evident excitement at having found something familiar. But he neither forces these similarities nor suppresses other totally foreign, almost totally incomprehensible behavior, like the improbable and inhibited courtships—they are never affairs—which these girls occasionally precipitate; or like the 'rice-bran wives' who are tied perpetually to their kitchens by the necessity of stirring (to keep them from spoiling) the pickles preserved in a rice-bran brine which are a staple of the Japanese diet.

The author is sometimes as naive as he is perceptive, and he passes by what

look like very promising approaches. Nowhere, for instance, does he really examine the bizarre place that western art, literature and music play in the lives of these girls. We are told of a girl whose favorite music is the second movement of the *Pathétique*, who has "read Poe, Hawthorne, Tolstoy, Dostoevski, Stendhal and many others", but we never get her reactions to any of these, reactions which might have told us more than the pages of self-analysis we are given.

As a sociological book, *Daughters of Changing Japan* will interest readers more or less in proportion to their interest in Japan. It is often charming, always honest, and conveys (sometimes one feels rather *in spite of* Mr. Cressy's own opinion) the rare truth that the Japanese are hardly at all like ourselves.

The same point is inadvertently but eloquently made by two Japanese novels in translation, by two of Japan's foremost living writers, which Knopf has recently published. *Some Prefer Nettles*, by Junichiro Tanizaki, is a beautifully written and thoroughly Japanese novel in which for 200 pages we watch the hero trying to make up his mind whether to divorce his wife—the single crisis of the book by western standards, and one which never finally occurs. But the delicate movement of the story, and the exquisite details of traditional Japanese life, beguile the reader, as they beguile the hero, from his essentially static condition. The characterization, especially of the hero's father-in-law and his geisha, who represent a deliberate turning of the back on the modern world, is sometimes so moving that we cannot doubt that we have understood that part of the author's meaning. The hero has left the old man and the girl, dressed up as pilgrims, on the island of Awaji where they will visit shrines and attend the puppet theatres and where the old man hopes to buy one of the old puppets: "the old man's life—off to Awaji appointed like a doll on the stage, accompanied by a doll, in search of an old doll to buy—seemed to suggest a profound spiritual peace reached without training and without effort."

Homecoming, by Jiro Osaragi, is a less successful but a good deal more ambitious novel, patterned on the European form. It has a plot which moves, sometimes too conscientiously, to a climax. The hero is a Japanese Navy officer who had resigned his commission before the war and lived in many parts of the world. After the war, he returns to Japan and encounters several people who had wronged him and, at last, his daughter with whom he finds a brief but genuine understanding. The plot is as busy as that of *Some Prefer Nettles* is quiet. Harold Strauss points out in his introduction that the extensive use of coincidental encounters is a kabuki tradition, and this is useful to know because one might otherwise take it for clumsiness. As it is, it is a distracting feature of an otherwise familiar plot-structure. What *is* clumsy, I think, is the heavy and didactic delineation of character:

The cruelty at the base of Oki's personality was now brutally apparent. He did his work in the early morning hours nowadays when

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there was no one around to disturb him, and he had just finished a short essay he had been asked to write on the home under the new constitution. In it he had pointed out that the new home was founded on the family members' respect for one another's personalities. Oki always believed what he wrote, and he had laid down his pen feeling it was a blessed thing to be living in the beautiful world he had just described. Blessings came cheap in Professor Oki's world, for he wrote, by preference, of things as they should be. And his writings were always on the highest level and in world dimensions, so full of Beauty and Goodness and Truth that they had implanted an unshakable confidence in many a reader who lived too far away ever to see the professor in person or observe his private life. But it was a concrete domestic problem in which Oki was now engaged, and universal standards did not apply. . . . Rather than his principles, it was his personality that he exercised freely and frankly with his family.

In the end, *Homecoming* is less satisfying than *Some Prefer Nettles* because one feels (rightly or wrongly) that it is trying to be a western novel and that, for us at least, it is in this respect unsuccessful. It comes recommended by Pearl Buck and James Michener, and Mr. Michener's remark is too guileless to let pass: "A novel which conveys exactly the many curious states of the Japanese mind which no occidental writer could hope to catch."

Modern Japanese novels almost always have to deal with the problem of westernization as it effects principal characters; and while this would seem to afford a point of common experience to the western reader, it is often in fact their most baffling and incomprehensible aspect. We can accept, as the *données* of a foreign society, the responses of the characters to their Japanese environment. But the responses to European customs are apt to seem peculiar, tasteless, and above all naive. There is an element of Elinor Glyn in the glamorous women, and the sophistication of the westernized Japanese is the sophistication of Jiggs and Maggie:

"*Prosit! A votre santé,*" said Louise, raising a bright amber-colored glass to her lips. She always said there was no decent champagne in the place, and overcharged him thirty per cent or so on the Dry Monoploe she secretly stored for herself.

To hide her self-consciousness she flung her words at him with a certain harshness, blowing smoke rings from a gold-tipped cigarette all the while. [Both quotations from *Some Prefer Nettles*.]

But these comparisons I have just made, and this sort of criticism, are not really to the point. We must continually remind ourselves that these pages were not written for us, that they report experiences for which we have no parallel, and that, on the basis of the art with which the rest of the book is

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told, we can be sure they are not naive. This earnest concern for Benedictine, the erotic passages of *The Arabian Nights*, Montmartre and nail-polish is probably simply beyond our understanding; it is certain to be misunderstood if it is assessed by our values. And because symbolic conflicts are involved which are as familiar to the Japanese reader as they are foreign to us, the novelist can easily lose us here if we enter into a conflict of wills. Ideally, perhaps, a translator ought to render not the words but the symbols into our tongue.

In reading these two competent translations (of which *Some Prefer Nettles* is a good deal the more literate) we are reminded that a translator of Arthur Waley's genius is as rare as a novelist of Lady Murasaki's, for none of the above complaints could be made of *The Tale of Genji*. We are reminded, too, that the transitive verb *to understand* encompasses one of the deepest human mysteries.

